



# BETTY BAIRD'S VENTURES

ANNA  
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# BETTY BAIRD'S VENTURES













“ BEHIND THE TREE BETTY AND LOIS WERE LAUGHING  
SILENTLY ” — *Frontispiece.* See page 121



# BETTY BAIRD'S VENTURES

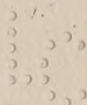
BY

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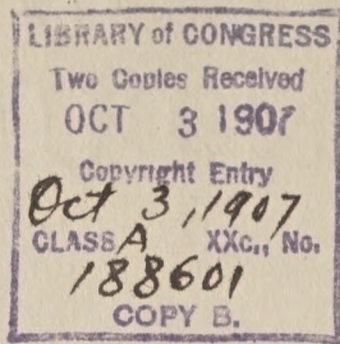
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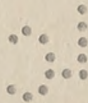


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FOR RUTH







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# *Betty Baird's Ventures*

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## I

### "IN TIGHT PAPERS"

"OH, this indigent family of ours! I certainly must bestir myself and do something to support it," said Betty Baird, airily, to her mother, yet looking determined, and straightening herself up among the cushions piled high on the broad window-seat in her room. She emphasized her words by beating a capacious blue sofa-pillow over which "The Pines" scampered in fantastic white lettering, filling the room with the spicy fragrance of the pine-needles brought from the campus of the boarding-school from which she had just graduated.

The airy words and determined manner were both characteristic of Betty, for she did everything with huge enjoyment combined with thorough earnestness.

"Betty, you alarm me," her mother said, laughing. "Your energy is misspent on such a warm day."



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Betty gave the pillow a final pat, then smoothed it out and stood it behind her straight back.

"I have always dreamed of doing Something, and it makes it more real when I pound a little."

From the way Betty said "Something" you could easily see that had the word been written it would have had a large capital S and a few flourishes, too.

"What are you thinking of doing?" asked her mother, seriously, yet smiling. Mrs. Baird usually entered into Betty's differing moods; that she could readily do, for she found every mood more engaging and lovable than the last.

Betty was silent for a moment, apparently lost in deep consideration of the different pursuits opening before her. She swung her feet lightly, gazing contemplatively at the peeping tips of her white tennis shoes and rumpling her bright hair with a distracted hand.

"There is literature," she suggested at length, looking at her mother gravely; and she began to count off on her fingers the various occupations that came to her mind. "At The Pines, you know, I was considered good in composition. And my graduating essay — well, you heard how the Bishop himself spoke of that."



Betty endeavored to speak meekly, but her brilliantly reminiscent smile was full of gratification.

“Yes,” said her mother, smiling and nodding. “Yet is not seventeen somewhat young for authorship?”

“‘In all the range of literature—’” began Betty, grandly, with a comprehensive sweep of her arm, and her sweet voice deepening. Then she laughed. “Oh, how grandiloquent! There is evidently the making of a prig in me.”

Like most girls of her age, Betty, perhaps, would have taken herself too seriously but for her saving sense of humor. Then, too, at boarding-school she had lived with girls who had not hesitated to destroy openly and ruthlessly her pet conceits and to laugh derisively at her many poetic flights. Very little escaped their wholesome give-and-take.

Mrs. Baird folded the dainty tea-towels she had been hemming, and leaned back in her low sewing-chair.

“Possibly, Betty, your sense of humor is carrying you too far, and now you are not taking yourself seriously enough. To accomplish anything we must believe in ourselves, in our call, and in our work.”



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Betty opened her eyes wide. This sounded more like her clerical father than her reserved mother.

"Now, Carissima, it is my turn to be alarmed. I can't imagine myself with a 'call.' As for my work, it is anything that happens to turn up."

"People are happiest, Betty, who have consecutive work, and plenty of it. Your father says you should take things as they come, and of course that is the best plan, but I think you will not be contented long without something definite. I am teaching you to keep house, but with your quickness you will find yourself with a good deal of time on your hands, especially on this Long Island farm, where you are a stranger. You do everything with a rush. Here you have finished your six towels and I have still one of mine to hem." Mrs. Baird picked up Betty's little pile of blue-and-white barred tea-towels and scrutinized the stitches. "They are neatly done."

"Of course they are," laughed Betty, throwing back her graceful shoulders in burlesque pomposity. Yet under the merry challenge of her sweet wilful eyes looked confidence in her untried powers. "What can't I do? But I simply hate to sew!"

Betty finished by making a comic little grim-



ace, though a glimmer of satisfied pride crept into her face at her mother's praise. After all, it is pleasant to do a thing well and to be told so.

“ You have a great capacity for love or hate, Betty, child, judging from the number of things you hourly ‘ hate ’ and ‘ love, ’ ” said Mrs. Baird. “ But I am not through my lecture. At Weston you had so many friends that you could easily fritter away half of your time. Now you are old enough to appreciate that time is a gift, and that you are responsible for it. You know my favorite Robertson speaks of that strange, solemn thing, time.”

“ Time does n't seem that way to me,” gasped Betty. “ It is on butterfly wings, flying swiftly, but, oh, so beautifully and gayly too.”

Mrs. Baird smiled at the amusement she felt at her own inopportune quotation.

“ I see, Betty, that my sentiment is at least twenty years too old for you,” she said, resuming her hemming.

Betty stared over the bay with unseeing eyes.

“ Mother ! ”

“ Yes, Betty.”

Betty turned a pair of dark perplexed eyes to her mother.



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"Is a man bankrupt when he's 'in tight papers'?"

Mrs. Baird looked up with some surprise; then she smiled.

"No, it's not so bad as that, child. It is only an uncomfortable tightness between resources and liabilities. You have heard your father say that, doubtless. It is his favorite expression for lack of money."

"Yes, father said he was 'in tight papers' when I asked him to let me visit Lois next week." Betty sighed dolefully over the missed delight of a visit to her old Pines schoolmate, Lois Byrd.

Mrs. Baird puckered her brows solicitously.

"I am afraid you are very much disappointed, Betty."

"Disappointed? Oh, dear, no!" exclaimed Betty, and she jumped from the window-seat and threw her arms round her mother. "You know I am not anxious to run off from you after being away for three years at school. I was to stay with Lois only a week, anyway, for they are going as usual to Capri."

Betty sank on the floor by her mother's chair, and, leaning cosily against her knee, talked on.

"When I asked father about going, he said he was 'in tight papers' and had a mortgage, and



that we had to be very economical until this place was paid for. Of course his salary with the Home Mission Board is larger than the one he had at the church in Weston, but his expenses have increased, and this buying a house takes a great deal of money, — I forget how much, but it seemed a lot, — and I made up my mind to help. Father sighed terribly when he got through talking. You have Katie to cook for you, and I could do something to make money, I am sure. What to do is the question.”

“You are rather young —” began her mother.

“Don’t you say that,” Betty interposed, with mock sternness. “Seventeen does n’t seem young to me. After all, it’s only one’s point of view, as Miss Greene used to say.”

Mrs. Baird folded her last towel and put it with Betty’s.

Betty sprang to her feet.

“Now you are through with your stint, mother, I’ll walk down by the water, and perhaps I’ll get inspiration there.” And humming, —

“Fair sails over us swinging,  
Lightly the breezes blow,”

interspersed with whistles in imitation of the cat-bird, she hurried down the box-bordered path to



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the wide gate that opened almost directly on the pebbly beach. She stood a moment there, and her eyes swept the water from hilly shore to hilly shore, with an interest born of novelty.

Far off towards the Sound she could catch a glimpse of the yellow sand-dunes, and outlining the glittering heaps, a sky as blue as any in her dreams of Italy. The hills and shore were a vivid green. Clumps of cedars clung tenaciously to the hills that man was disfiguring through his merchandising spirit.

It was wonderfully beautiful, wonderfully brilliant and inspiring, but how unlike her Pennsylvania mountains among which she had been reared! After their grandeur, the hills of the north shore of Long Island looked almost absurdly pretentious. Yet she was already feeling the secret charm of water and the alluring mystery of fog and mist.

Betty loved this hour of the day, when the boats were coming in from their day's journey, the graceful yachts threading their way to their anchorages up the harbor, the coal schooners which loomed ominously around the point like gigantic gray water-birds of prehistoric ages, the fisherman with his characteristic short oar-stroke, the clammer sculling his flat-bottomed skiff, all alike



hurrying to their different havens as fast as wind and tide and oar could carry them.

A spell lay on the world. Each piece of the day's work was swiftly and surely finding its place in the plan of the universe. It was not man, but some guiding, powerful Hand that seemed, at that early twilight hour, to be fashioning and completing man's ways and destinies; not boats and sailors and trees and winding shore, but gods and creative elements, and mysterious workings in the unseen workshop of destiny.

The silent returning of boats! There was no hallooing or laughter, but the quiet coming to shore as if the soft south wind had carried away from mortal ears any words spoken in the falling shadows.

Betty walked slowly along the shore, then threw herself down on the grassy margin of the path close to the fence of their cornfield. Her winsome young face was very grave as she looked up at the changing sky, or watched this noiseless activity of the water life.

Suddenly her thoughts were arrested by a familiar sound, — the clear whistle of Bob-white. Her face lit up as she turned quickly towards a low white fence that ran along the field, and looked



lovingly for the little brown figure. There he was on the fence-post, calling tenderly his "covey-call." How trim and alert he was! Yet something melancholy mingled with his wholesome, cheerful note.

Betty felt a strange sympathy for the brave fellow as he flew from post to post, giving out his evening call. She could imitate his whistle perfectly, but would she frighten him away? She gave a low whistle. No, he was not frightened. He answered, "Bob-white!" She whistled back. "Bob-white, Bob-white!"

A great homesickness for the mountains of her native State crept over her while she listened. Oh, Bob-white!

She could almost see those sombre mountains, strong yet tender, softened by their veil of evening mist. How often in the spring she had listened to Bob-white, singing from the foot of the Blue Ridge!

The water lapped gently at her feet, and she hated it, for oh, how, in the stirrings of her memory, the mountains loomed in the twilight! She could again feel their quiet and strength, as of standing armies, that had always filled her heart when she looked at them from her window before falling asleep.



They had been a very part of her childhood; she had climbed their rocky steeps by paths rugged and crooked, and so interminable that they seemed, to her childish fancy, to lead straight to heaven, for heaven was just behind the farthest golden cloud.

She had played and picnicked among them, and had gone berrying and wild-flower gathering, hunting for the wild grape, the blackberry, for the golden-rod and purple asters, for the earliest arbutus, and the wintergreen. She could not remember a day when she had not felt they were there, eternally vigilant; sternly guarding, but loving. What did this water creeping at her feet care for her? It was not like her mountains. She buried her face in her hands and burst into a passion of tears.

Betty was suffering a homesickness for her mountains and all they represented, her childhood's home, the dear familiar people and ways and sights, as acute as the wanderer's for his native land. Her affections, always strong and tender, clung with a firmness not common with a girl of seventeen to the village of Weston nestling at the foot of the Blue Ridge. It was bred into the bone!

Gradually the sobs ceased, and Betty, drying



her eyes, stood up to look for Bob-white; but his wandering flock had heard his call, and in the deepening shadows had hastened with him to their nest.

A wave of disappointment swept over Betty when she found herself deserted by her old friend, Bob-white. She had carried on many a conversation with him in the days when she had learned to imitate almost every bird in the neighborhood. Bob-white had always been her favorite.

During the hard winters she had scattered grain for her pets; and one of the duties of the Order of the Cup, a society she had organized in Weston, had been to enlist farmers in feeding the birds through severe seasons. She now decided to begin work in their interest as soon as she became acquainted in the village, for she knew how easily a snowy winter could exterminate the delightful, homely bird who protected the fields and gave interest to the loveliest landscape.

Betty felt better. She always did when she could translate feeling into doing. She became almost reconciled to her new surroundings, and she hurried home developing this plan in her active brain.

At dinner Betty was unusually silent, for her



father seemed to her too tired to listen to this scheme for Bob-white. She suspected that her numberless projects and impetuous energy were a little wearing to the placid scholar. His worn face renewed her afternoon's determination to help in the financial crisis. She ran upstairs to write letters, — one to the dearest and truest of schoolmates, Lois Byrd, of Baltimore, — and to compose a short article for the village paper on the subject of her birds.

Doctor and Mrs. Baird sat on the broad porch facing the water, talking over the day.

“Elizabeth seemed very quiet at dinner,” said the doctor. “Is she well?”

“Yes, Betty is always well, but I think she will be a little lonely here without any of her young friends,” answered her mother. “Craig Ellsworth is the only young person she knows.”

“Is n't she kept busy helping you?”

“Katie is very competent, and with only three in our family there is hardly enough work to go round,” replied Mrs. Baird.

“I am very desirous of having Elizabeth grow into a good housewife,” said the doctor, stroking his beard meditatively.

“She has always been skilful in the kitchen, and she learns quickly, but I think with her house-



keeping she should have something else. Young people need variety."

"I deprecate this restlessness of the age," said Doctor Baird, shaking his head disapprovingly.

"Elizabeth is not dissatisfied, even if she is restless. She is joy personified. All growing things are constantly moving. Though she is impetuous she is not blundering; she never potters over her work, and she accomplishes a vast amount without appearing to work at all."

"I want her to be like her mother," said Doctor Baird, smiling, and taking his wife's pretty soft hand in his own, — "exactly like her mother, to suit me."

Mrs. Baird smiled back, but shook her head.

"No, no! I think that in many respects my education was a mistake, even for my generation, and assuredly it would be for Betty's. It was not general enough. A variety of interests gives proportion, health, and preserves equilibrium."

"It trained you for your life, and that is about our only test," suggested her husband.

Mrs. Baird remained silent. She was thinking of her constitutional shyness, that had been fostered by her secluded girlhood, until even now she suffered when she met strangers; that outside of her own home she wholly lacked initiative;



and that if it had been necessary for her to earn her own living it would have been impossible.

How the gymnasium, boating, swimming, and skating, or the organization of an altruistic society like Betty's Order of the Cup would have helped her to overcome her inherited feebleness of nerve, and made facing the world easier and even pleasant! She rejoiced to see Betty wholesome, fearless, active, even when the initiative was half wilful, sanguine, and lacking in self-consciousness.

She broke the silence by saying:

“I have thought a great deal about this question since she has been away. This is the memory season for our Betty. A joyous girlhood is a memory that will sweeten many a hard after-year.”

She was silent for a moment, then added, with a sigh:

“After all, how little we can do to save her from mistakes! However, I shall try to keep one step ahead of her in all her experiences.”

“Yes,” answered Doctor Baird; “and I like your idea of making this a beautiful memory season for Betty, ‘making nests of pleasant thoughts,’ as Ruskin puts it. What do you think she could combine with her home duties?”



Mrs. Baird hesitated to broach Betty's latest plan. She knew her husband's love and reverence for great literature, and his impatience with anything that fell short of his ideal. What would he say if Betty, at seventeen, should try to write for publication?

"She is now thinking of — literature," she hazarded.

"Literature!"

"She thinks that — perhaps — she has a gift for writing."

"A gift for writing what?" asked Doctor Baird, perturbedly, but to the point.

"I hardly know. I doubt if she does herself."

"What has started the child on this?" he asked, smiling in spite of his dismay, and polishing his glasses vigorously.

"You remember that her compositions were much admired —"

"Poor child!" interposed the doctor.

"You won't discourage her?" Mrs. Baird asked, somewhat anxiously.

"Elizabeth is not easily discouraged," said Doctor Baird, with pride. "Anyway, it will be good training for her in English. In writing, as in everything else, one must serve an apprenticeship. But of course she won't have anything accepted."



## II

### “MY MOTHER’S COOKERY JOURNAL”

BETTY could not forget that her father was “in tight papers.” She was constantly revolving in her mind schemes for his relief; but what could a girl of seventeen do? A boarding-school education was not a particularly good preparation for teaching. Moreover, she had quietly ascertained that there were no vacancies in the village school, and she knew she could not leave home to teach elsewhere. She carefully went over all the opportunities offered by the village, but could not hit on a feasible plan.

Literature beckoned her!

After the talk with her mother, she spent several days in her room, looking over the literary productions that had received the highest marks at The Pines.

Betty’s room was very pretty, and she had a knack of making it not only immaculately clean, but bright and attractive. A long, recessed win-



dow, with cushioned seat, overlooked the bay, while a side window towards the west opened into a quaint old garden.

Besides the white bed, the low dressing-table, and the chest of drawers of bird's-eye maple, a series of bookshelves stood in a shallow alcove filled with a queer but beloved assortment of books old and new, the shabby old ones with childish dog's-ears and their pictures kissed into blurs, the new ones still gay with spotless covers and maidenly bookmarks.

Above her writing-desk hung a picture that represented an epoch, — her class with their graduating gowns billowing around them, and in each gloved right hand a diploma. A Russian samovar, a pair of tall brass candlesticks, and a green vase filled with sweet peas, topped the bookshelves, with a background of photographs of her schoolmates.

Then there was her table, at which she did her serious writing, drawn close to the window. It was heaped with papers, and had a "literary look," she said.

A blue-and-white school flag hung loyally next to her father's college emblem over the doorway, and souvenirs of The Pines — pillows, pictures, and books — were on every hand.



On this June afternoon a late number of *The Atlantic Monthly* lay on the window-seat.

“Father thinks highly of this,” she said half aloud. She took it up and settled down on the cushions. “He says it is so literary. I shall look it over and see just what they publish, and get an idea of what I ought to send. Though, if it is so literary I suppose one of my essays on — let me see — ”

She threw down the magazine and crossed to her desk. She pulled out first one drawer, then another, and selected several bundles of her school essays, each tied with a blue-and-white ribbon.

As she sat on the floor, going over her papers, the sun, flaring in the window for a moment before sinking behind the hill, fell on her hair, transmuting it into spirals of gold. The broad, smooth white forehead was slightly puckered as she studied conscientiously the availability of her material for *The Atlantic*. The strong, finely curved chin, with its crown of red tender lips, rested on one knee while she leaned forward, eagerly sorting out the different styles of essays.

“ ‘Twilight!’ ” she said aloud, tapping a folded paper meditatively. “That sounds literary enough even for *The Atlantic*.”

Her face brightened as she read it.



"Oh, this is good." She sprang to her feet and ran to the head of the stairs, strewing her path with manuscripts.

"Mother!" she called, and she flew down the steps, "won't you come right up, please? I am so excited. I have found the very thing for *The Atlantic*."

Mrs. Baird soon found herself ensconced in the window-seat with Betty.

"You know, father is always saying *The Atlantic* is very literary," began Betty, breathless from her good fortune. "I don't know much about it, but it has a great many essays. I learned that at The Pines, in my literature class. Holmes and Lowell wrote for it in its early days. Those are the very words in our book — no, Lowell was its editor. Anyway, how does this essay of mine strike you? Miss Greene said it was excellent. See 'excellent' written on it? That shows! 'Day soon took on the pallid transparent curtain of twilight,' — that's the way it really seemed, mother, — 'until night, solemn and stately, came forth in all her splendor of star and high-hung moon!'"

Betty sighed when she finished. It was the last sentence in a long rhapsody on "Twilight."

"It sounds so good I am afraid I stole it from some one."



“They say people always feel that way when they write,” Mrs. Baird reassured her daughter. She was not troubled on that score; her trouble was of a different nature.

“It does n’t seem possible to write anything so good now,” said Betty, who was re-reading parts of it with evident enjoyment. “I remember exactly how I wrote it. I was perfectly, perfectly oblivious to every one around me. I did n’t feel as if I were doing it at all. Our literature teacher said that is the way all the best writers write, — George Eliot and all those master minds.”

“I am glad to see you in such good company, child,” said her mother, in kindly banter.

Betty saw the point, of course, and had a good laugh at her own expense.

“Now, you know, mother, I did n’t mean that. I shall copy this essay in a bold, clear hand, and send it right off, — under my own name, too. Lois will be surprised to see it. Her father takes *The Atlantic*. It will take four stamps each way, — sixteen cents. I shall have to earn some stamps if this comes back too many times. They say they are returned quite often. Well, I may have better luck. You can never tell. Miss Perry has never had one returned.”

Betty went to her table and stamped and



directed two large envelopes, then copied and re-copied the "excellent" essay on "Twilight," and finally mailed it to the editor of *The Atlantic*.

"How many mails are there from New York to Hobart Bay?" she asked, going into her father's study on the evening of the momentous day.

"Two," replied her father, deep in a long row of statistics concerning Home Missions.

"Only two!" she repeated dejectedly, and she walked out.

Betty was determined not to depend on one literary effort. She went to the little public library that adorned the principal street of the village, resolved to read the magazines diligently. The librarian was Miss Hunt, — a pretty, gentle, brown-eyed maiden-lady of fifty.

"I should like —" faltered Betty, and her face grew warm and red — "to know more about the different magazines — for I am going to try to write for them."

Miss Hunt looked up with an incredulous gleam in her kind eyes.

"Why, how interesting!" she exclaimed politely.

"I suppose you think, as mother does, that it is presumptuous for me to try it, but I want to do something, and this is — 'eminently lady-like'!"



Betty laughed, and Miss Hunt echoed her in a faint yet friendly way. She was attracted to this tall, slim, fresh-faced, winsome girl brimming over with interest in life. Though she had seen her only a half-dozen times, she had begun to have a strong liking for her. Then, too, Miss Hunt had been for many years absorbed in Home Missions, and was naturally drawn to a daughter of one of the home secretaries of her own denomination. She had, the dear lady, a strong bias amounting to a passion for the subject, and in time Betty was to discover that all roads of conversation, somehow, led to the mission field.

“By the way, Miss Baird, there are two young ladies in the village who are home from college whom I should be pleased to introduce to you,” said Miss Hunt, feeling this to be a safer topic than the one Betty had in mind.

“Thank you, Miss Hunt,” answered Betty, a little absently. Her glance fell on the magazine she held, and her thoughts flew back to the absorbing problem. “I shall be very busy, but after I have made a start I shall have more time to make acquaintances.”

Miss Hunt looked at her admiringly. She remembered a time when she too had written poems and love stories, but she had not had the courage



to read them over, even to herself, save in the privacy of her own room. They were yellow as autumn leaves as they lay in her little trunk in the attic with a package of letters thirty years old! And here stood this beautiful dark-eyed girl talking of writing as confidently as she had once talked over a new tatting design. How different girls were now, going to college and writing unblushingly for publication!

The clock in the village struck four.

"The library closes in an hour?" asked Betty.

"An hour and a half."

"I must find something to read," said Betty, turning towards the table where the monthly magazines lay.

"*Harper's* is my favorite magazine," said Miss Hunt, handing her a copy. "It is full of sad stories."

"I love sad stories," cried Betty, joyfully. She took the magazine and began reading.

More than an hour passed, and Betty, engrossed, read on.

As she turned a page Miss Hunt interrupted her, saying that the closing hour had arrived.

"How do you like the magazine?" she asked, while picking up and assorting the books on the large desk.



“It does n’t seem my style at all. It’s a magazine for married people, is n’t it? There’s a great deal about children, too. I can, though, remember some of my childhood feelings, and I might write them up in the form of a story.”

“Try it,” Miss Hunt advised her.

Betty’s pony-cart was at the door, and together they went to Miss Hunt’s home; then Betty drove thoughtfully to the farm, which she had called “Boxwood” on account of the evergreen that outlined the beds of geometrical design, and bordered the path from the wide gate, ending in two huge clumps at the entrance of the house. She found her mother in the garden, training rose vines and “pottering around,” as she called her daily visit to her flowers.

“I think I’ll try *Harper’s* next. It’s Miss Hunt’s favorite,” Betty announced. She kissed her mother and, fanning herself with her hat, sank down on the garden seat under a cedar tree that spread its branches over a poppy bed.

“Would it not be wiser to begin with a less well-known magazine?” counselled her mother.

“‘Too low they build, who build beneath the Stars,’” Betty answered blithely, with one of her old-time quotations. “However, while the editor of the *The Atlantic* is deciding on the merits of



my essay, I believe that I'll try *My Mother's Cookery Journal*. There are whole columns about home affairs, cooking, laundering, household decoration, gardens, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, as the advertisements say so promisingly."

"Now, that is an excellent plan," said her mother, approvingly. "You can begin by sending half a dozen of Katie's recipes —"

"Oh, mother, then it would be Katie's literature!" wailed Betty, half laughing, but not at all pleased with the practical suggestion.

"It would bring you in the stamps you need."

"I hate stamps!"

Betty's bad humor passed quickly while they walked from flower to flower, picking off the dead leaves, training recalcitrant boughs, and rearranging wind-tossed vines and shrubs that had played too violently in the swift south breeze of the early morning.

"Miss Spice is at the College Settlement this month, mother," Betty said presently, burying her face in a bunch of white roses. "I wonder if she would n't like some of these flowers for her sick people."

"I am sure she would," said Mrs. Baird, with a glad ring in her voice. "I was thinking it a



great pity that more people could not enjoy this abundance.”

“I’ll begin picking them at once,” cried Betty, clapping her hands enthusiastically. “Father can take them into town to her.”

“We can hardly ask your father to do it when his time and strength are so valuable. Moreover, Mr. Ellsworth told me some time ago that the express companies would carry flowers to missions and settlements free of charge.”

“Oh, is n’t that perfectly splendid! Think how clusters of white roses and honeysuckle will look in those rickety, ramshackle rooms,” said Betty, holding off at arm’s length a bouquet for the dining-room table.

It was an old-fashioned, fragrant garden. Betty had even found among its treasures the sweet-scented shrub, and had crushed the spicy purple flower in her handkerchief, and when doing so had felt that she had one of the romantic privileges of her grandmother.

Under a scraggly cedar tree was a great bed of brilliant red poppies of translucent texture and daring color, and against its lichened trunk stood a bench, built years before. With the urn-capped fence-posts for a background, and the lean cedar stretching above it, the seat had a pictur-



esqueness that Betty was quick to appreciate. She spent many delightful moments there, looking down into the scarlet poppy cups that waited as if for the incense of her praise.

"Now I have it, mother!" cried Betty, jumping up from the seat where she had thrown herself to arrange a lapful of flowers, and dancing about delightedly. "I'll get my camera and take a picture of this corner, and call it — let me see — 'A Nook in My Garden.' Don't you think that is a splendid idea, Carissima?"

Scarcely waiting for her mother's congratulations on her inspiration, Betty dashed from point to point to find the best view for the picture, her mother following more slowly. They finally decided on one which would include three of the colonial fence-posts.

"I might have a copy of *My Mother's Cookery Journal* on the seat," laughed Betty, who was in high spirits over the new venture. She ran to her room for the camera.

The focussing was a matter of the greatest importance. The camera had to be turned this way and that; the legs of the tripod had to be lengthened, then shortened; now the whole affair was picked up bodily, and moved back several



feet; again it was placed as many feet in front of its original position.

At last all was arranged to Betty’s satisfaction. She stood back, the rubber bulb in her right hand, ready to take the picture. Forgetting, in her excitement, that her mother was not to be in the picture at all, she raised her left hand warningly.

“Now, mother, please don’t move until I tell you,” she pleaded, and snap! went the shutter, and it was done.

“Betty, oh, Betty,” her mother cried out, “I don’t want to be in *My Mother’s Cookery Journal!*”

“Oh, mother, mother!” shrieked Betty, hugging herself joyfully. “Was there ever anything so funny? I was thinking it was you instead of the poppies that I was to take. Now we’ll try our luck with another film. Will the lady please step out?”

The second film was quickly rolled into place, and a second picture and a third were taken, for Betty would not risk failure.

As the house was large, Betty had been able to fit up a dark-room on the second floor, and she now flew up to that place of mystery and suspense. How her heart beat when she saw the delightful nook materialize and come out in all its lights and shadows, a real photograph! The joy of this was



never lost to Betty through repetition; each new picture was a distinct surprise.

Betty hunted up facts — not always a pleasant task to a girl with imagination — about poppies, where and how to plant them, and the amount of water and sunshine they needed, ending her article with a line of original poetry.

The very next day Betty began to haunt the post-office. That it was convincingly proven that there were only two daily mails had nothing to do with the matter. Half a dozen times a day she found herself drawn by some invisible lode-stone to the tiny square window, to ask for the Baird mail. Fortunately, the postmaster included in his activities the dispensing of groceries, and Betty began to deal with him as an excuse for her frequent visits.

At last she was rewarded.

“Oh, mother, father, see!” she cried, rushing into the study where they were sitting, waving, as if it were a flag of victory, a veritable check.

“Why, where did it come from?” asked her mother, in surprise, stretching out her hand for it.

“Listen, all ye people! ‘Enclosed please find a check for one dollar and twenty-five cents for your article on “A Nook in My Garden,” to



appear in a future number of *My Mother’s Cookery Journal*.’ Now, what do you say to that?” she demanded triumphantly.

“Good!” exclaimed her father, kissing her.

She stooped over his shoulder to get another look at the marvellous thing, while he too gazed as if fascinated at this evidence that his little daughter had really written something that would see the light of print. The strip of blue paper made Betty feel that she could do anything. The dollar and twenty-five cents was an elixir of inspiration and hope.

“I must hurry right up to my room and write something else. I have a splendid new idea,” she said, tenderly taking the wonderful check from her father.

“What are you going to do with it?” he asked, with a twinkle in his serious eyes.

“I have n’t quite decided.” Betty meditated. “I think I’ll save it for Christmas.”

“Be sure you put it under your pillow to-night,” her father warned her, and he smiled pleasantly at his little joke, while Betty feigned wrath, and flung herself out of the room, but began singing at the top of her voice before the door was fairly closed.



### III

#### MERRYLEGS

**T**HE next morning Betty was up bright and early to have a plunge with her father before he went to the city. The tide was high about six o'clock, and after swimming and floating half an hour, they sat down with Mrs. Baird to a breakfast with strawberries from their own garden and cream from their own cow, items that added spice and contentment to a meal that even otherwise would have been abundantly satisfactory.

"This is a very attractive table," said Dr. Baird, leaning over to smell the clove-pinks Betty had put in the centre. He added, smiling, "It reconciles one to these commuter's early breakfasts."

Betty drove her father to the station, about two miles distant, stopping in the village on her way back to do the day's marketing. The long street was filled with handsome equipages. Betty had met no one in Hobart except the librarian, Miss Hunt, and of course the Ellsworths, who



were neighbors. Consequently, she was new to the inquisitive little village, and more than one person, looking after her, was impelled to ask who she was.

Her plain white linen dress, with a dainty flowing tie, and the white college hat of felt, from which a red quill inclined saucily, were very smart and becoming. The lithe, athletic figure, almost boyish in its freedom from "fuss and feathers," yet round and girlish, showed in every movement and buoyant step her keen zest in the happy summer life around her.

Betty filled her cart with parcels, then, after unhitching sturdy Merrylegs and patting him for a moment, she placed one foot on the step, and was about to get into the cart, when an automobile puffed by, honking warningly. Merrylegs shied violently at the sound, and Betty was thrown over on the seat, while the tiny animal ran for dear life.

At first Betty could do nothing but hold on, to keep from being thrown out. The frightened steed ran some distance, but was finally brought to a standstill by a powerfully built young man, who sprang out from the sidewalk and literally took the charming little animal into his arms as he would a football antagonist.



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Betty hastily regained the seat and reached out for the reins. With a low bow, and a merry twinkle in a pair of candid blue eyes that shone from his tanned face like brilliant and kindly turquoise, the handsome youth handed them to her.

"Oh, thank you!" said Betty, adjusting her hat and straightening the lines. "I hope you were not mortally injured by my vicious steed."

Her dark eyes smiled mischievously, when she noted the six feet two inches and the broad shoulders of her rescuer. She could not help laughing. It was funny to see that big boy and her mite of a pony.

Keeping his muscular hand on the frisky animal, so that Betty could not drive off, while a daring light came into his preternaturally grave countenance, he said, —

"Do you think it is *quite* safe for you to drive alone?"

"I shall run the fearful risk," answered Betty, sober as a judge.

"I think I shall follow you in my car, for your steed is evidently very fiery."

"Pray do not give yourself any anxiety," answered Betty, without a smile, though her eyes laughed. "If you would be so kind, I should



like your name, so I can propose you as a candidate for a life-saving medal."

"Thank you, but I prefer to remain a 'hero in humble life,'" the young man answered, with equal gravity.

"You are too modest," urged Betty, politely.

"It was only a situation I saved, not a life. In a second your hat would have been in the road."

"I am under deep obligations. I could face death, but not ridicule. Thank you again!" Betty flicked Merrylegs with the lines and he trotted sedately down the street.

All the way home Betty laughed over the episode.

"Oh, mother," she cried, and she leaped out of the cart and ran into the flower-garden, "the funniest thing I ever saw happened this very morning in the village."

"Stop laughing, Betty, and tell me about it," said her mother, yet yielding to the contagion of her laughter.

Betty rapidly recounted every detail of her adventure.

"I am afraid you did not thank the boy properly," said Mrs. Baird.

"Why, mother, how could I look on him ex-



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cept as a melodramatic hero, when he literally towered over poor little Merrylegs? For a moment I thought he would just pick him up and spank him. Merrylegs was gritty, though."

"I should like to know him," said her mother. "One should be grateful for a kindness, even if it is not performed at the risk of one's neck."

Betty, glancing up at her, felt that it would be wise to hurry away, for when her mother's mouth had that little pucker, it meant that she was not wholly satisfied with her daughter.

"Well, I think I'll go upstairs," she said.

"Sit down, Betty," said her mother, looking at her with troubled eyes.

"Now, Carissima, what have I done?" asked Betty, cajolingly, smoothing her mother's hair caressingly.

"Don't you think, Betty, that you were somewhat easy in your conversation with that strange lad?" asked Mrs. Baird.

Betty's cheeks flamed. She shook her head negatively and stood up. Her mother put out a detaining hand.

"I think that a few simple words of gratitude would have been better."

"I didn't have any gratitude," said Betty, impatiently. "It was all a humbug," and she



ran up to her room and slammed the door in a way that was not to be mistaken. She threw herself on the bed, and cried luxuriously. The runaway had been more than the funny scene she had thought it, and the excitement had upset her. The world grew very dark and unjust to poor Betty.

“Mother always said I should not be self-conscious with boys, but treat them as I did girls, and now she is scolding me because I did that very thing. If it had been a girl, we would have laughed together over the ridiculousness of it all, and I should have invited her to come home with me in my cart.”

Betty did not find her argument wholly convincing. She knew that the fun of the situation had appealed to her so strongly that she could not resist prolonging it. Yes, she had missed the merry-making of The Pines, and this was the first opportunity she had had to give-and-take since coming home. With a blush she owned that she had acted more like a girl of fourteen than one who had passed through the dignifying process of graduating.

She sat up on the edge of the bed, very red and very cross.

“Well, it’s horrid,” she decided. She did n’t



know with whom to be crossdest, whether with the guiltless lad, the pony, or, perhaps, with Betty Baird.

"Yes, it's horrid to be grown up," she repeated aloud.

She bathed her face and rubbed it so vigorously that she came out of the process as red as a rose.

"Oh, mother, please forgive me!" she cried contritely, running to where Mrs. Baird still sat. "I am so unhappy I don't know what to do. I hate to be grown up, I hate scolding, I hate — I hate, with an awful hatred, that horrid boy. But I do love you."

"It is hard to know when we are grown up. Everything else came to you easily and naturally. I hoped that would, too."

"Well, it does n't. There is nothing that I hate as much as young-ladyfiedness."

"You are upset by the excitement of the morning. You must not worry any more about it. Don't think how you act, Betty."

"I was impudent to you and it hurts me —"

Her mother put her hand over Betty's mouth. "Now, let us walk," she proposed.

"Come, *that's* a good thing," cried Betty, quoting from her "Alice in Wonderland," and



dragging her mother up. "Good! This is a 'vain and unprofitable conversation' on such a morning"; and laughing, she skipped her mother down to the gate, swinging her hand back and forth.

Mrs. Baird begged off. "I am all out of breath, Betty."

"It's good for you. I am getting even, too," said Betty, gayly, and, like two happy school-girls, they walked, arm in arm, up and down the shore.



## IV

### THE CLAMMERBOY

Boxwood.

**D**EAREST LOIS, — Do you ever see *My Mother's Cookery Journal* in Capri? They have accepted — think of it! — an article I wrote about our poppy bed. I sent a picture of it, too, and named it, “A Nook in Our Garden.” When it is published I shall send you a copy. It is *very exciting* to write things and have them accepted.

I have sent my essay on “Twilight” — you remember the one I got “excellent” for — to *The Atlantic Monthly*. I have not yet heard from them. I suppose they have more manuscripts to read than *My Mother's Cookery Journal*. When I showed father my acceptance, he said we must begin at the foot of the ladder. He does not seem very hopeful about *The Atlantic*.

It is *perfectly lovely* to sign — no, I mean indorse — checks. Father told me just where to write my name — I never can remember — and I think it had an *accustomed* look. I dashed my name right off and held my breath for fear of making a blot. You know, we girls at The Pines decided that that was the only way to write stylishly; too much care gave a crude look, also lacked character.



I may have to get a typewriter. They say — at least Miss Hunt, the librarian here, says — that typewritten articles receive closer attention than written ones. I don't think that is fair, do you? Then think what *terrible mistakes* the editors might make, because many *geniuses* are *very poor* and could n't afford to buy one.

Our place is perfectly lovely just now; but it is awfully lonesome without the girls and the mountains. Last night I cried and cried, I missed our grand old Blue Ridge so. But it is simply *grand* to be home with father and mother, and I have a great deal to do. Mother is making a housekeeper of me! Now don't laugh!

I met that boy who saved my life! He is at Harvard, as I suspected. You can't fool a Pines girl in such matters. Miss Hunt introduced us. I told you all about his appearance in my last letter, though mother says she can't imagine how I saw so much and drew so many conclusions in a minute's encounter and in such embarrassing circumstances. But I did. He is what Jess would call "distangy." He is on the football team. He hopes great things for Harvard next year. Then, he is on the crew. He has a yacht and an automobile; rides horseback too.

There is such a nice boy next door — half a mile away — who is clamming. I know him pretty well. I wish girls could clam. I think it pays better than literature. He makes *eleven dollars* and *twenty-eight cents* on a barrel, and every week he sends a barrel



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to New York on the steamboat. He is trying to make enough money to go to college. I shall teach him Latin this summer. He's eighteen. He has a little sister three years old, a regular fairy. I call her Dot because she is so weenty, the cutest mite!

We are in rather *tight papers* this summer, so I want to make money. We are buying this beautiful place. I told you in my last letter I'd describe our new house, and it is n't new either, for father said it was built a hundred years ago. I won't go into details, for the "human interest" in my letters takes all the room! The house is large for three people. It has white shingles, the nice broad kind, and there is a porch or portico running across the front with white pillars — Doric? Corinthian? Ionic? Anyway, they are fluted and very graceful. It is the kind of house the people are building new. Query: could they build them old? Writing for publication makes one very critical. Oh, where was I?

Our bay is *glorious*, and then the garden is full of old-fashioned bushes and flowers. The Japanese quince was blooming when I came home, and orange-tipped orioles were flying around. I suppose the gay colors attracted them. I have named the place "Boxwood." How does it sound?

I must stop now, for it is growing dark, and the birds are going to sleep. Every evening we have a regular choir of them. Long Island is noted for its great number of birds. One bird is singing alone now. Dear little piping thing, I can barely hear it — growing sleepier and sleepier!



You'll be getting sleepier and sleepier too, if I ramble on much longer, so good-night, *my dearest chum!*

*Your devoted*

BETTY.

Betty finished her letter and became conscious that she had written first and last and at great length about her own affairs, without once mentioning Lois's. Her face grew hot, and she thought:

"This is what Miss Greene was always warning us against, — egoism. She hoped our Order of the Cup would overcome it. Well, I must write a postscript and answer Lois's letter. I'll rewrite this last page. No, I haven't time. Lois will understand."

POSTSCRIPTUM.

I am reading the different editors' requirements for stories, for I shall soon begin a story, and they all ask for human interest. How I wish you were here, darling Lois!

The next morning Betty drove into the village to post her letter and to do her shopping. She was going along slowly, for she always saved the fat, spoiled pony.

She was bareheaded; light hair curling in the moist atmosphere, and sticking out in little curls



from the heavy braid; skin browning fast and cheeks glowing to a delightful berry color; eyes dark and happy, seeing everything, as if they were meant for use, and not for beauty alone, as older people were apt to think when they looked into their clear depths; straight proud nose held daintily aloft, as if its owner were displeased, which was not the case, for Betty took things pretty much as they came; mouth curving to a smile, yet trembling sweetly too, in sympathy with the possibilities of life's sorrows, so very far off on this perfect June day.

Such was Betty Baird outwardly, as she went gayly along.

"Oh, Clammerboy!" she called, and drew rein, as a tall lad, sunburned to the color of fine bronze, came out of a trim garden, carrying a pair of oars and a fat cushion. He wore knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket with the sleeves cut off at the shoulders. Something in his well-knit frame and the slant of the oars over his shoulder carried out still further the resemblance to a masterly piece of bronze. He hurried up to the pony, dropping the cushion to jerk off his red cap.

"You can't guess what came yesterday," said Betty, at once.



The Clammerboy shook his head.

"Do try to guess," insisted Betty.

"I can't think what comes to girls. Now, to boys — I never guess anyway," he concluded desperately.

Betty sighed, and gazed on him pityingly.

"What a lot of fun you must miss! I have guessed since I was two years old."

"Girls are different," said the Clammerboy, comfortably.

"Oh, boys can do some things; clam, for instance," said Betty, condescendingly.

"But what came?" demanded the boy.

"Why, a — check!" Betty prolonged the suspense before speaking out the great word.

"Gee, you don't mean it!" he cried, his eyes shining, and dropping his oars and taking the check which Betty held out to him.

"For Literature!" he ejaculated reverently. Betty nodded.

The Clammerboy whistled softly, his custom when greatly pleased.

"Well, you have begun it," he said slowly.

"I think clamming brings more money," said Betty, politely, when she saw that he had been properly impressed.

"Clamming!" snorted the boy, scornfully.



"Now don't you dare to say a word against clamming," warned Betty, "for I'm dying to go into the business. Indeed, I don't see why I could n't," she added briskly.

"It would n't do at all for a girl," exclaimed the Clammerboy, emphatically. He looked at his own torn and blackened nails and then at the girl's dainty white hands.

"I'm no more afraid of browning my 'lily white hand' than you are," Betty protested.

"But it's not the work for a lady," he insisted. "Ladies never have clammed," he added convincingly.

Betty's chin went up in the air.

"Neither did they go to college in the dark ages."

The Clammerboy was miserable. Betty looked very determined, and his stock of arguments seemed futile before her learning.

Betty was quick to follow up her advantage.

"Yes, and women were not allowed control of their own property, until Susan Anthony or some one proved their rights. Why, even when mother was a girl, school-teaching was the only thing a girl could do to earn her own living, and they had wretched pay. They had to



be poor relations — think of it!” Betty’s eyes flashed, — “unless they had parents to support them or an income of some kind. Women can’t vote — ”

“You would n’t vote!” broke in the boy, indignantly.

Betty waved his exclamation aside. By this time she was so warmed to her subject that she almost forgot her original intention, which was solely to tease the very serious Clammerboy. Then, seeing his distressed countenance, she flicked her pony with the whip and stopped short.

Something quaintly chivalrous shone in the lad’s face as he stood there, a silent protest against any lowering of his ideal of woman’s place and woman’s work in the world. His frank hazel eyes did not waver while he gravely listened to her arguments, though his natural slowness increased when brought into contrast with her ready repartee.

“Well, I might prefer being a lily of the field to a clammergirl, but I am anxious to make some money for a definite purpose, and I will turn into a vegetable garden or a lily bed if I can make money — or into a — clam!” continued Betty, with a flash of merriment in her eyes, but



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with a grave manner. She wondered if he would hoot at the idea of such a talkative girl turning into a "clam"! But no, he was too much in earnest to turn the conversation into a joke.

"There are some things for girls to do and some for boys," he reiterated doggedly.

"Clamming for boys at twelve dollars a barrel, and dish-washing for girls at — virtue is its own reward — when it's to save old Katie's rheumatic back," scorned Betty. "I'd better go clamming and pension Katie outright, and hire a girl to wash dishes."

"Clamming is no work for ladies," persisted the boy.

"Well, if ladies can't clam, can they make money out of a vegetable garden? Father says you have a fine one, and I have about decided to combine trucking with Literature."

"Yes, that would be the thing. I'll come over some day soon, at high tide, and tell you all about it and show you how you should begin. Mine has paid."

"Oh, dear," cried Betty, ruefully, "I have kept you from your clamming, and time and tide wait for no man, or boy either. In your case especially there is a tide in the affairs of men that



taken — no, not at the flood but at the ebb, leads on to fortune. Please forgive me.”

“There’s plenty of time,” answered the Clammerboy, looking over the bay. “There goes Cap. Simpson, the best clammer out.”

Betty’s eyes followed the sturdy figure of the boy they had nicknamed “Cap.”

The sky was of undimmed blue and the bay unruffled as a looking-glass. The young clammer’s scow rested on its blue surface. A light wind swept across the water, bringing to the shore a refreshing taste of saltiness.

“How good life is! How good!” cried Betty. She turned from the sky and water to the silent boy. “It certainly ought to make clamming a poem.”

She seemed, as she spoke, to hold Life in the palm of her pretty hand, flashing it like a jewel in the sunlight.

“It’s different out there,” said the boy, literally.

Betty laughed, and gently slapped Merrylegs with the reins, starting him into his slow jog, while the Clammerboy picked up his oars and pillow, ran down to his scow, and pushed off.

“Bring your Latin Grammar over when you



come to talk vegetables," called Betty after him. The lad waved his red cap.

As she drove along Betty grew thoughtful, and the pony, taking advantage of her brown study, stopped, resting comfortably under a willow tree that had gathered beneath its mighty branches deep restful shadows that a fat little pony knew how to appreciate on a summer afternoon.

Stooping over a small basket in front of her, Betty took out a serviceable-looking commonplace book and wrote for several minutes.

"NOTE — Start a vegetable garden. Price seeds at Smith's."

She sat up straight and gazed over the shore and water, then bent down again, writing swiftly, —

"The shore in the sunlight glittered like a great jewelled girdle (belt?) dropped carelessly, and the little cove nestled cosily in one of its many folds."

She looked critically at the shore as she ended her sentence.

"Yes, that 's true," she murmured, tapping the book with her pencil. "It is not far-fetched."

Cheek by jowl with this was a recipe for caper sauce, —



“ Make a drawn butter sauce, and add two or three tablespoonfuls of French Capers; remove from fire and add a little lemon juice,” followed by, —

“ She keeps the gift of years before  
A withered violet in her bliss.”

Then came a recipe for Vassar fudge, with these for its nearest neighbors:

“ Ah, did you once see Shelley plain?  
And did he stop and speak to you?  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems, and new !”

“ Meats for June, — mutton, beef, lamb, veal.”



## V

### LOIS BYRD'S COMING

“**M**OTHER, mother, here is a letter from Lois!” cried Betty, joyously, bursting into her father’s study and waving a dainty envelope aloft in triumph. “Lois is coming — coming. I can hardly believe it!”

“Why, I thought Lois was going to Capri with her father,” said Mrs. Baird, looking for more information; but Betty was bending over the long letter, completely absorbed.

“Listen to this,” she cried. “‘Father is going to make a long journey to the east — Egypt and other places — with a party of friends. His doctor thinks it will help him — oh, that it would! — and he is now writing to your mother to ask if I may stay with you!’ Such an if! As if we are n’t simply wild to have her, are n’t we, mother, father?”

Dr. Baird, glancing up from his paper, smiled amusedly at the idea of there being any question about having Lois, Betty’s dearest friend.



"I shall be delighted to have Lois," Mrs. Baird answered her. "I love her, and I know how happy you two are together."

"Won't we three girls, Carissima, have a lovely time out here?" said Betty, kissing her mother rapturously, and giving her a delighted bear-hug.

"Your mother looks as young as either of you," said Dr. Baird.

"Indeed she does," agreed Betty, decisively, for she always refused to see the gray hairs that were sprinkling the beautiful brown, and insisted they were only short faded ones. Gray? No, indeed!

Mrs. Baird, looking pleased but laughing away their flattery, asked Betty to read more of the letter.

"'You know how funny father is, Betty. When I read him your letter he said I should tell you that Capri was a very ancient, not up-to-the-minute place, wholly lacking the modernizing and ennobling influence of *My Mother's Cookery Journal*, but that he would introduce the journal as soon as you had captured its pages, for then he would be sure of its having the right kind of modernity.'

"Isn't Mr. Byrd ironical? It is perfectly fascinating!"



Betty laughed happily over Mr. Byrd's pleasantries, while continuing to read, —

“ ‘It is too good to be true that we are to be together all summer, perhaps longer. I take your darling mother's consent for granted, for did she not adopt me in Weston? I wanted to take you by surprise, and begged father not to write. I know how you love surprises, but father thought it rather a bold plan. I know that I have a home always and in all circumstances with you, darling old Betty Baird.’

“Now, mother, I must run right upstairs and see about arranging her room. She will have the room next to mine?” asked Betty. “I must hurry and make it pretty.”

Betty started towards the door, with her eyes traveling over the pages of the letter.

“Do sit down and finish your letter, Betty,” said her mother. “You have n't told us yet when Lois is coming.”

“Oh, I forgot,” exclaimed Betty, shrugging her shoulders, the joke flashing upon her. “Why, not for a week. Isn't that too bad! Not for a whole week!”

She turned the pages impetuously.

“Here it is. Mr. Byrd wants us to telegraph, so that he can make arrangements immediately.”



"Then before beginning with Lois's room have John hitch the pony and take this telegram to the office." Mrs. Baird wrote a cordial welcome to Lois.

Betty wrinkled her pretty forehead perplexedly.

"Why did n't I think of that myself! All I thought of was to make her room artistic. I must learn to be more business-like."

"I shall write to Mr. Byrd at once," said Mrs. Baird, taking up her paper. "A week will give us more time to make her room attractive, Betty, so don't be disappointed."

"Yes, we have so much to do. Won't Lois love this view of the bay?" said Betty, pointing out of the window to where the dying violets and crimsons of sunset were reflected in dimmer, more mysterious tints in the water.

"Perhaps her own view of the Potomac is more to her taste," suggested Mrs. Baird.

"Oh, I am sure of Lois's tastes. We always like the same things."

"And people?"

"Ye-s-s." Betty hesitated. "I think I like *more* people and like them harder, for she is fastidious. But when it comes to friends, we are one."

"I am glad of that. Now hurry off, for it is almost dinner-time."



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Yes, the week did pass, though Betty consulted her calendar skeptically each day, for Time did not seem to pass as the faithful calendar asserted it did in its large red figures and new daily quotations, and the day for Lois's arrival actually came.

It was Thursday, and Betty was up with the birds that twittered and chirped and sang away in the fir trees in front of her room. She whistled and sang softly, keeping them company. She put their song to words. "Lois-is-coming, Lois-is-coming," each tiny bird sang. Strange how the notes fitted the happy words!

Every few minutes, while she was dressing, she peeped into Lois's room. How pretty it was! The Swiss curtains were drawn back, revealing the ever-changing picture of the bay. A fir tree threw waving shadows into the room. Not a pin was out of place. Lois's favorite flowers, sweet peas, were in a bowl on the dressing-table, and above the writing-desk a little vine trailed over a picture of The Pines.

How the hours lagged, after breakfast! Would train-time never come? Oh, if it should rain and Lois miss the beauty of the sunset!

And low tide! That summer everybody had come at low tide, and if it were low Lois would



only see the tall green marsh-grass, beautiful, to be sure, in its vivid coloring, and falling before the wind like the long pile of green velvet; but not wonderful, like the rising tide rushing through the water-gates at the mill they had to pass on their way home.

Betty ran for the tide-table, though she knew it would be high tide; but she could not sit still. Anything was better than that, even tormenting one's self!

"Let us go upstairs for a last peep, mother."

Betty flew up the low broad steps two at a time, Mrs. Baird following more leisurely.

"It looks like Lois already," said Betty, glancing around the room. "She loves to watch the sunset, and the paper is sweet, with these little rosebuds and tiny fresh leaves tumbling over the white ground. Lois is so dainty. I am glad the paper and paint are fresh."

"Yes, and there is a splendid southerly breeze through that window," said Mrs. Baird, adjusting the already perfect curtains.

"It is as charming as I thought it before I knew Lois was to have it, and that's a test. I become critical when things become — concrete — that's not the word, but you understand."

Merrylegs was decked in all his splendor of



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new yellow harness with shining brass points, and the yellow cart was dusted and polished until it shone. Merrylegs held his proud head high.

Betty, with a cluster of roses in her belt and her head bare, looked radiant. She had to wait half an hour for the train. Then, breathless and with eager, watchful eyes, she scanned each traveler in the crowd pouring out on the platforms.

"There she is, there she is!" she exclaimed, and waved her hand frantically when Lois stepped out of the jostling throng and looked about her expectantly. Seeing the pony-cart, she hurried forward. Betty jumped down, and into each other's arms they flew.

"Oh, I am happy!" sighed Betty, blissfully. They seated themselves in the cart, and she tapped Merrylegs lightly with her whip.

"It is *so* good to see you again, Betty. You have n't changed at all," said Lois, though it might have puzzled one to say what change could have taken place in the few weeks since they graduated.

"You look taller, Lois. Perhaps it is that beautiful hat. It's awfully good to have you." Betty squeezed Lois's hands and Merrylegs trotted gayly on at his own sweet will.



Lois was not so tall as Betty, nor did she possess her beauty, nor that magnetism which drew every one until it grew to be a joke among her friends that if a stranger wanted to ask for a street she waited until she could ask Betty.

Lois was very affectionate, maidenly, and withal something of a tease. She had serious brown eyes, arching eyebrows, dark hair tastefully arranged; indeed, a look of well-being, of having been delicately nurtured, was in every graceful movement, as well as in the fine skin and figure and the courteous glance. Her gowns bore in every line the unmistakable mark of Paris, and even a casual look was sufficient to note that she had traveled extensively, and that money had been lavished wisely upon her.

It was near sunset when they reached home, and the tide was high.

"How beautiful! You didn't tell me half," exclaimed Lois, rapturously.

"Oh, I am so glad you are not disappointed, Lois. I have been trying to see the place with your eyes all the week," answered Betty.

Mrs. Baird, hearing the cart approach, came out on the porch.

"There is your mother! Oh, Mrs. Baird, I



am so glad to be here!" Lois cried, and sprang down from the cart straight into Mrs. Baird's outstretched arms.

The "three girls" went up to Lois's room. The sun, sinking behind the hills, threw crimson rays of welcome through the small-paned windows. Lois clasped her hands as she stood at the door, gazing at the sunset.

"I have always longed for a room where I could see the sun set behind the hills."

"It is coming home, dear," said Mrs. Baird, putting her arms around the girl. "Now let me take off this hat and veil so that I can see your pretty face better."

The next day Betty rushed to her mother.

"Mother, is n't this perfectly grand! Mrs. Ellsworth has to go to a funeral and can't take Dotty with her, and she asked me if I would take care of her to-night and to-morrow," she cried, when she returned with Lois, after taking her father to the station. "It never rains but it pours. I have Lois and now here comes Dotty."

Mrs. Baird's face was full of concern.

"I trust Mrs. Ellsworth is not in trouble," she said. To her a funeral did not present the same aspect it did to Betty, judging from the latter's blithe words and manner.



"I don't think it is any one *dear*, you know. I am afraid I did n't ask, but she was n't crying and Craig laughed as usual, which is n't much. Besides, if it were any one near he would n't be going clamming in his overalls."

Betty's logic was not wholly convincing to her mother, who hardly expected the poor lad to wear mourning when out clamming.

"I must go over and see about it, Betty. Have the cart ready for your father's train if I am detained, and explain the circumstances. He has had a hard day, so make him very comfortable."

"I'll run upstairs and see that his study is in order, the lamps trimmed and bright, and the fly — there never is more than one in *your* rooms — out. I'll give his easy chair a twist towards the sunset and his slippers a twist towards the chair, place his thin coat on the back of the chair, and have his letters in a row on the table, and Daddy will be all comfy in a minute."

Mrs. Baird was putting on her bonnet, and Betty stood by, smoothing out her gloves and seeing that the dainty bow under the chin was at the proper angle. She gave the bow several farewell pats, then stepped back for inspection.

"You'll do," she announced.



Her mother, laughing, drew on her gloves and gave a look into the study.

"I dislike to be away when your father comes home, but I can't leave Mrs. Ellsworth alone if she needs help. Your father will have a good substitute for me."

Betty rowed her mother to the Ellsworth home, then came swiftly back, for train-time was approaching.

A few hours later Mrs. Baird came home, in her arms the three-year-old Dot of Betty's heart, a grave brownie of a child, with the dignity of an Indian idol, and the sweetness and loveliness and charm of a Donatello cherub.



## VI

### PICKLES

“PICKLES!” murmured Betty, ecstatically, clasping her hands and gazing up at the ceiling. “Pickles!”

Dot looked up gravely from the floor, where she was lost in the rapture of clothes that “come off and on” belonging to Betty’s flaxen-haired doll, whose height almost equalled Dot’s own diminutive inches.

Dot was a model listener; she was also the most dignified and mannered personage in the village.

“Pickles, of course! Oh, Dot, why did n’t you suggest long ere this, — when you must have seen me searching every cranny of my brain for a means of earning a livelihood, — why, oh, why did n’t you whisper, ‘pickles,’ delicious pickles, cucumber pickles, Betty’s Best Brand Pickles? It would have been the part of a friend, Dotty.”



Betty shook her head reproachfully at the tiny listener, whose big brown eyes gazed up into hers, her dimpled chin in her baby hand.

"Oh, Dotty Dotteral! No disrespect meant, for you *are* a bird, but not a dullard," continued Betty.

The little face quivered, then with a toss of her curls the wee bit of humanity jumped up from her lowly seat and stood, all defiance, before Betty. Her dignity was offended. Such facetiousness was unwarranted liberty. Betty snapped cajoling fingers at her, trying to restore pleasant relations, but it had gone too far. Dot set up a dignified wail and buried her curly head in Betty's lap, refusing to look up or to have her grief assuaged by the most artful coaxing. Betty had scolded her!

"Dotty Wotty, cunningest darling!" cried Betty, trying to lift the rigid little figure to her feet. "Let Betty see your pretty eyes."

The child raised her head, but held her tiny fingers over her face. Through the curving bars peeped her great round eyes.

"Where is Dotty Wotty?" asked Betty, looking round everywhere, everywhere but at the small figure standing erect and still and dominating, with the solemn eyes watching Betty's every motion.



“Where’s Dotty Wotty?” cried Betty, anxiously, getting up from her chair and peering into corners, lifting books, peeping into closets.

The brown eyes behind the plump little fingers gazed unwinkingly.

“Oh, Dotty Wotty is carried off by bad fairies and has left her Betty all alone,” lamented Betty, loudly, and wiped her eyes desperately.

“Here I is, here I is!” cried Dotty, while two wee hands flew to the handkerchief and ten chubby fingers dabbed into Betty’s face to wipe away the tears. “Here I is, Betty. Don’t oo see Dotty?” and she clambered hastily into Betty’s lap, hugging her close and repentantly kissing her sweet cheeks.

“Why, Dotty Wotty!” exclaimed Betty, in great surprise, opening her eyes wide, to Dot’s huge delight. “Where did you come from? Did the good fairies bring you back to Betty?”

Dot’s face grew sunny as she snuggled her warm, soft little body closer in Betty’s arms.

“Bad fairies took Dotty, dood fairies brung Dotty back,” she whispered happily.

“Good, good fairies!” cried Betty. “Let us thank them. I have a notion that they like to be thanked something like this — for it would n’t do just to say ‘Thank you, ma’am,’ to fairies.”



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Trying her hand at improvising, Betty began to sing to the good fairies, —

“Oh, fairies good,  
Oh, fairies good,  
To bring Dotty Wotty  
Back in a hood ;  
In a hood of spun gold,  
O'er the wild gray wold,  
Tasselled and strung  
With ribbons wrung  
From the bright rainbow  
Hung low, so low.”

As Betty crooned softly, the sun, glinting through the bowed shutters of the open window, haloed her fair hair, tousled in play with Dotty.

The serious brown eyes were looking into hers, when, glancing upward, they fell on the radiant, sunshiny locks.

“Oh, Betty, oo look like ee pitty lady ith ee hoops round her head.” The child pointed eagerly to a colored picture of a medieval saint with a halo. Betty looked at the picture and turned laughing to Dotty.

“Now we certainly are friends again, Little Personage, after that delicate compliment,” she said, kissing the curly head and dimpled red cheek.



Dotty nodded solemn assent and slid down to the floor with the giantess doll.

“May I now consult your Highness about pickles?” asked Betty, meekly. She had learned her lesson. Queen Dot must be treated with a fine reserve and the utmost consideration.

“Pickles? Wat’s pickles?”

Dot stopped in the act of taking off for the tenth time a pair of slippers that adorned the doll’s feet.

“A pickle? Let me consult the ‘Standard.’” Betty looked into the great volume sedately, though smiles twinkled deep in her eyes.

“‘One of certain objects preserved or flavored in pickle, as a cucumber or an onion.’ Now we, Dot, will stick to cucumbers.”

Dotty smiled and nodded tolerantly. She loved Betty, but had to keep on her dignity with her; she was too free a lance for the self-contained child.

“What do you say, Dotty Wotty, to making a dozen bottles of cucumber pickles, a whole dozen, two more than you have fingers?” Betty said, and counted them off on the child’s chubby hands.

Dotty smiled broadly at the counting, then, without answering, proceeded to undress the flaxen Queen of Hearts.



Betty meditated a moment.

“Why not two dozen while we are at it? Can you give a fair and unprejudiced opinion on the subject? The Woman's Exchange must be hungry and thirsting for pickles. I am sure of it! Then why not two dozen? Never will I be limited —”

Signs of the bad fairies returning caused Betty to smile and kiss her hand with assumed airy unconcern to the small autocrat.

“No, Dotty, not twenty-five, but fifty jars, — no, a hundred jars! I'll be the greatest pickle preserver in the world, a Pierpont Morgan on the Pickle Exchange!”

Dotty actually laughed aloud at that, and Betty, feeling flattered, ran on.

“Think, Dotty, of a hundred jars of pickles, those little tiny cucumber pickles that Katie makes up. We have the cucumbers in our own garden. Katie planted so many of them that every one laughed. It ought really to be Katie's pickles, Katie's pickle pocket pennies. Can you say that real fast? Pickle pocket pennies. Yes, Katie's money instead of mine; but I'll do the preserving. Well, I am always poaching on Katie's preserves! That's a pun, Dotty. A hundred bottles at forty cents each!”



Betty snatched up a piece of paper and began figuring rapidly. She always dealt in even numbers, for she confessed she was weak in multiplication.

“It’s done! Forty dollars, less the cost of jars, vinegar, and other small items. Let us find out on how many occasions pickles are used.”

Betty ran for her cook book and read with many gesticulations:

“‘Pickles are very popular’ — list — ‘popular’ — ‘as a relish, but it must be confessed that they are not the most wholesome diet’ — ours will be! ‘This is chiefly due-to-the-fact-that-they-are-made-of-hard-crude-and-often-unripe-fruit.’ Our pickles will be made of soft, cultivated, ripe fruit and a fit diet for invalids.”

Dot was highly amused.

“Wat makes oo do dat?” the pretty tot of a prig asked, as Betty’s arms swung in dramatic action. Her mother never did such things. Children are great sticklers for conventions.

“That’s too hard a conundrum. Come, it’s time for your afternoon nap.” Betty took her up in her arms. Dotty clung to the Queen of Hearts, and Betty held the two until both were asleep, — the superannuated doll’s eyes shut and Dot cuddled in the curve of the young arm.



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Betty debated and planned her second venture, Literature and pickles. Two irons in the fire!

Lois came in.

"Hush!" Betty warned, with a wave of her hand towards the sleeping child.

Lois sat down quietly in the window-seat.

"Lois," Betty whispered, "I have had an inspiration. I am going to make pickles for the Woman's Exchange, — a hundred bottles!"



## VII

### BETTY "IN A PICKLE"

"**T**HERE!" exclaimed Betty, with a grand gesture, as she stood off and gazed admiringly at fifty bottles of pickled cucumbers. "Fifty bottles of Betty's Best Brand at thirty-five cents a bottle, cheap at that, — sorrowfully cheap, — but beautiful, absolutely beautiful!"

She turned to her audience of fellow admirers standing behind her, — her mother, Lois, and, in the background, old shining Katie, chuckling with pride in her young "missy," with her ample arms akimbo, her bandanna bobbing and gyrating about like a red and yellow buoy in a choppy sea.

"Katie," continued Betty, "there's a fortune, a neat little fortune in that row. Some dense people might call them pickles, but we know pickles spell fortune."

"Yes, Missy, dat dey dun do."

"'Dun do!' Dundee, marmalade! Oh, blessed Katie, in your simple, guileless language, you have



given me another inspiration that will spell fortune. Marmalade! Not Dundee or, as you so wittily put it, 'dun do,' but English breakfast marmalade, — the kind, you know, Lois, that the little English girls always have in the nursery with the poor governess, and when they have smeared it all over their faces and are wiping their naughty, sticky fingers on the beautiful governess's only white gown, in steps Uncle John from India, and — and — 'to be continued in our next.' ”

“Don't you think, daughter, that it would be well to see how these pickles go before you venture anything else?” asked Mrs. Baird, pleased and smiling, but with a somewhat anxious eye on the long line of jars. “You need to get your market first.”

“Mother! Catch your hare before you cook it? That's not the business method of to-day. Those pickles will make their own market. As if any housekeeper, even the dullest, the most sordid, could resist their charms! Why, a sight of them would cure the worst dyspeptic. I am only sorry now that I did n't make a hundred.”

“Oh, Betty, think of the worry of trying to dispose of a hundred bottles,” said Lois.

“A hundred sounds so much better. A hun-



dred! The mere sound is thrilling. A hundred bottles of pickles, — such pickles! Especially recommended for midnight feasts at boarding-school!"

"You ought to send Miss Leet a sample bottle," laughed Lois.

"Our grocer, Mr. Beech, said he would take half a dozen on commission. Mrs. Ellsworth wants four bottles. I don't like to sell to her, but she insists on buying them. Selling to a friend —!" Betty looked dubious.

"Yes," said Mrs. Baird. "I don't like it either. I always give a jar of everything I make to my neighbors, just to be neighborly."

"Why not sell her two and give her two?" suggested Lois. "Betty is doing this to make money and she may give away too many. Besides, Mrs. Baird, it's really doing Mrs. Ellsworth a favor, because you can't buy such things. You remember you sent home to father a box of preserves and jellies when I visited you in Weston, and father said he would give anything if he could buy such delicacies."

"That is very kind of your father," Mrs. Baird answered, quite embarrassed.

During this conversation Betty had been lifting the whole fifty bottles, one by one, and smil-



ing in perfect delight as she examined the small symmetrical cucumbers.

"I did n't know pickles were so lovely!" she mused. "Positively fascinating! Such a delicious green!"

Lois dragged her away, and together they ran upstairs, where, after making the beds and dusting, they sat down to do a little figuring on the cost. This had been an almost daily process since the day Betty first thought of pickles.

Lois sat down at the desk and, taking up a pencil and paper, and assuming a very business-like expression, began the real work, — book-keeping.

"You certainly must have a book, Betty, and put down — what was it Miss Spice taught us about accounts? Credit and Debit?"

"I am not sure what she called them, but they meant what you pay out and what you get in. Out and In would do as well."

"No, we must be business-like. I am sure it is Credit, but the Debit does n't sound right."

"Yes, and there was Deficit, but let's not have that, for it means what you lose, and *we won't lose.*"

"No, indeed," cried Lois, almost paling at the horrid idea.



"Look, I have found this dear little book," cried Betty, handing Lois a square book bound in marble boards.

Lois puckered up her charming lips, and wrote "Credit" on several pages, in a neat, painstaking hand, and "Debit" on as many more.

"I know it's not Debit, Betty," she said, puzzled. "I can tell as soon as I see a word written down whether it is correct or not."

"Then why not be original? We know what it means. Under Debit we will put down all we sell, under Credit all it costs, bottles, vinegar, commissions, and so forth."

"And gifts?"

"Y-e-e-s," said Betty, irresolutely. "Perhaps; but it looks cold-blooded to put down the cost of a present."

"Yes, it does," Lois answered. "Let's call them by some other name."

"Of course! Good idea! Now, how would Untasted Sweets — no, that's horrid. I know! Friendship's Offerings, shortened to F. O."

"How much will the bottles and vinegar cost, Bet?"

"Here is a piece of paper on which I was trying to figure out the cost of each jar," Betty answered, and the two heads bent over the slip



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while she explained the maze of figures to Lois.

"The cucumbers were in your garden and cost nothing," Lois said at last. "I think you ought to clear on your quart jars — well, you ought to make —"

Lois worked away on the piece of paper a few minutes, while Betty sat in the window-seat and watched her in suspense.

"You ought to clear —" Lois stopped again, and scrutinized her figures, "y-e-e-s, twenty-seven cents on each jar."

"Twenty-seven cents!"

"Perhaps it might be twenty-seven and a half, but fractions are hard."

"Yes, and sevens are, too. Well, let's say twenty-five, to be sure, and then there will be no risk."

"That's twelve dollars and fifty cents, a dollar more than Craig is making on his clams, and it didn't take nearly so long," cried Betty, in triumph.

"They are not sold yet," Lois cautioned her.

"They are as good as sold!" said Betty, confidently. "Now let us read this splendid new book about automobiles."

The grocer sold seven bottles of the pickles,



Betty gave Mrs. Ellsworth four, steadfastly refusing to accept pay for them, and Miss Hunt two, and the Woman's Exchange took twelve bottles but said they could n't possibly sell any more.

Two weeks later Betty stood before the array on the pantry shelf.

"Twenty-five bottles!" she murmured, "Twenty-five bottles of the best pickles ever put up for an unappreciative world's palate."

She heard her mother coming in, and, without turning, she waved her hand towards the shelf.

"They make quite a display, don't they, mother? There are pickles and pickles, — and we have them!"

She laughed, but there was a suspicious tremor in her voice, and she carefully kept her face turned from her mother, as she hurried out to the veranda, whistling "Bob-white, Bob-white!" to keep up her courage.

Mrs. Baird followed her and put her arm around her waist.

"It's all right, Carissima," said Betty, and she squeezed her mother in her young arms and tried to laugh. "You don't think I am such a poor business woman as to cry over a first — well, not failure, but not exactly a boom in pickles, was it? Anyway, there is always Literature,



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sure! And if people don't care for sours I can turn to sweets. It will be like a soft answer turning away wrath, or heaping coals of fire, to give the world preserves after it has scorned my pickles. Such pickles, too!"

"A smile is better than a frown," said her mother, taking up her conceit, and smiling.

Betty laughed and kissed her mother; then, with a swing full of energy and still whistling, she ran down to the gate.

"I am going to walk down the shore and see my Bob-white," she called back over her shoulder.

She ran until she came to a great fir tree that she and Lois had selected for their favorite seat. It seemed very tall and very straight, but with curving branches, the most sympathetically curved in the world of trees, boughs that bent earthward and then swept towards the blue sky as if they would take the girl up and swing her into the mood of the robins that tilted on the delicate twigs.

Betty dropped down on the soft moss under the fir. The whistle ceased suddenly, and a sob took its place. She scarcely noticed the pleasant little brown figure of Bob-white; her eyes could see only the long line of pickle-jars.



"I have tried, and I have made only a dollar and twenty-five cents in literature, and now I have cleared only a dollar and eighty-five cents on my pickles."

She burst out crying. Bob-white started and fluttered away, the fir tree sighed, and poor Betty cried on.

The tide came flowing in, and with it came the fleet of clammers, their work interrupted by the rising water. Craig Ellsworth sculled close to the shore near where Betty sat.

"Hello!" he cried, putting down his oar and forming a megaphone with his hands. "Hello, Betty!"

Betty heard, but she would not turn her head. No, she would not look at the successful boy, with his boat-load of clams, while her pickles, — a big sob stuck in her throat, and she rubbed her eyes energetically with the back of her hand. She was too proud to have him see her cry over her failure.

"Hello, there, Betty! Are you deaf?" Craig called again.

Betty kept her head turned away.

In a second Craig had pushed his boat to the shore and leaped out on the dry rocks.

"What's the matter, Betty? Are you sick?" he asked solicitously, drawing near her.



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"Oh, it's you, Craig," she said, turning a suspiciously bright pair of eyes towards the lad. "Had a good day?" she asked, with attempted nonchalance.

"Bully! Got over a bushel."

"That's good." Betty's voice showed an unusual lack of enthusiasm.

Craig looked at her searchingly.

"What's up, Betty? Or down? In the dumps?"

"What do you mean?" asked Betty, defiantly, with an I-dare-you-to-see-that-I-cried look in her red-rimmed eyes.

"Oh, nothing," said the boy, with elaborate indifference. In some things he was wise beyond his years. Besides, he looked up to Betty as one who had, to use his own expression, "brains to burn," and he could not always treat her with the off-hand manner he used towards other girls of her age. To Craig Ellsworth, born with a reverence for academic learning, Betty's three years at boarding-school and her remarkable knowledge of Latin put her quite above the common run of girls.

"Why," he had told his father, with amazement, "Betty Baird can take up Horace and read off one of those poems as if it were English."



Even the superiority of being a boy could not wholly offset this profound and fascinating attainment.

Now he was silent with kind, though awkward pretence, looking everywhere but at poor miserable Betty.

"I just *hate* people who pretend," burst out Betty, with the quick injustice of one who considers herself a failure in the presence of one who has succeeded, and she whirled around and began walking rapidly towards the house.

Craig stood rooted to the spot. Why, what had happened to Betty Baird, — Betty, who was always, in his eyes, as free from vapors and cranks as the best boy? What had he done to her? He gazed after her for a second, then walked slowly towards his clamming scow, the unwitting fly in the ointment of Betty's success, or rather, lack of success.

Betty turned and saw the dejected droop of the lad's head and, with characteristically quick compunction, she ran swiftly back.

"Forgive me, Clammerboy. I was horrid. I know you were trying to be kind when you pretended not to see that I was crying. I *was* crying. I was almost screaming when you came up. There!"



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The Clammerboy was visibly embarrassed. He was not at home with emotions, especially girlish ones. Not being able to think of a remark suited to the occasion, he plunged his hand into his trousers pocket, drew out his knife, and began to scalp the bark off the tree.

"Don't hurt my tree," objected Betty, snatching the knife from him and shutting the blade with a snap.

The lad was immensely relieved. They were once more on familiar grounds. He tried to take the knife from Betty, and in the tussle their normal and recognizable relations were restored. After all, he thought, there was no nonsense about Betty Baird. She was n't a cry-baby, and she did n't confuse a fellow by mysterious, erratic ways. When the struggle ceased, Craig had the knife, and Betty was sitting breathless on the ground.

"Clammerboy," presently said Betty, solemnly, and her voice took on a deeper note, "I am a failure."

"Oh, no, no!" he protested.

"Yes, a failure. I have twenty-five jars of pickles left on my hands."

Tragedy could go no further. The Clammerboy understood now the meaning of those red



eyes and quivering lips. He knew what it would mean to him to have his clams left on his hands.

"Jiminy!" was all he could say, but Betty felt comforted, and brightened at once.

"I am not discouraged," she assured him. "I am going in for preserves now."

"Bully for you! You have grit."

"I was mad," said Betty. "I was mad because you had clams and I had — pickles! Only you could sell your clams while I had overstocked on pickles."

"I could n't help that. Why were you mad at me? I did n't do anything to keep your pickles from selling," answered the boy, with a boy's logic.

"Oh, well, you would understand if you were a girl. But a boy —! Boys can't understand anything unless it is printed right out in front of their eyes. Here comes Lois!"

Evidently Mrs. Baird and she had been talking over the predicament, for her look was very sympathetic. Throwing her arm around Betty's shoulder, she gave her little caressing pats.

Betty shook her head, and Lois understood that she meant she could not stand being pitied.

"Let's all make fudge," Lois proposed. "It's



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cool enough with this north wind. Anyway, we can make it in my chafing-dish."

"Let's," agreed Betty.

"Bully!" Craig chimed in.

The three dashed towards the house.



## VIII

### A NEW SCHEME AND A DORY RACE

“**W**HY don’t you start a garden?” asked the Clammerboy.

“A garden so late in the summer? Who ever heard of such a thing? But I do want to plan one for next year,” answered Betty, with the assurance of a girl who had seen John, their farmer, do the early planting of a vegetable garden “on shares.”

“Lots of people. I, for one,” replied the Clammerboy, calmly. “I’m doing a great deal of planting just now, and I will help you if you want me to.”

“I’d love to have a dear little garden with peas and corn — and potatoes and red tomatoes too. But, really, is n’t it too late?”

“No, not for fall vegetables. I’m beginning to plant purple-top turnips to-day. I had cabbages there this spring, and I expect to have the turnips ready for the table by the middle of August. After that I shall plant winter beets.”



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"My, what a lot you know!" exclaimed Betty, flatteringly. "How in the world did you learn all that? I certainly must begin at once. It's so interesting. Where shall I begin?" she asked, starting off towards the garden that had been cultivated on the lines of old garden lore for several generations.

"I take a magazine that tells me when and how to do everything. I'll lend it to you. John can do the hard work and you can plan and watch and make money. I do."

"Make money!" Those words threw a spell over poor Betty, who had grown weary looking into the little glass window of their letter-box in the post-office and at the array of pickles on the pantry shelf.

"Oh, mother," she cried, almost running into Mrs. Baird and Lois, in her eagerness to get to the vegetable garden. "We have such a good plan. I'm going to make heaps and heaps of money, and I won't have to wait until the pears are ripe enough to preserve, either. I am going to start a garden."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Lois. "I'll help. I'll make a grand digger, I am sure."

"But is n't it rather late?" Mrs. Baird asked, with interest.



“Not at all. Craig is planting purple-top — is n’t that a pretty name? — purple-top turnips now.”

“We don’t care much for turnips,” suggested Mrs. Baird, doubtfully.

“I love turnips, especially raw ones,” Lois declared.

“I’ll buy them from Betty, Mrs. Baird, and sell them to our grocer,” said Craig, with the air of an established commission merchant. “And Betty can sow sweet corn and Early Valentine beans,” he added learnedly.

“And I can sow cabbages,” said Betty.

“And winter carrots,” said Craig.

“And cucumbers,” said Betty.

“And Eclipse beets,” said Craig.

“And reap money,” finished Betty, triumphantly.

“How mercenary my little girl is growing!” laughed Mrs. Baird.

“Well,” Betty defended herself, “one of those political economy men, in a lecture at The Pines, said that when we received money for our work we had one big proof that we are efficient.”

“Bet, you will be on the platform yet,” teased Lois.



"What else can we plant, Craig?" Betty asked, now full of fervor at the thought of making a start in life, even if it were through the vegetable garden.

"You can plant winter celery on the land from which you harvest your early corn."

"'From which you harvest your early corn,'" quoted Lois, banteringly. "That sounds very much like your garden magazine, Craig. And Betty, you know, has n't any early corn."

"You're right," Craig said, laughing good-naturedly. "I read the magazine over so often that I suppose I do often string 'em out in the very words."

"That is the only way to learn anything," answered Lois.

"Harvest!" repeated Betty, with a smile of poetic joy, and not heeding the friendly little tilt between Lois and Craig. "I didn't have any idea such pretty words were used in — in huckstering."

"Certainly huckstering is not a very romantic name," said Mrs. Baird. "As you say, Betty, planting and sowing and reaping and harvesting are poetical."

"I don't see why one can't use pretty words as well as ugly ones when they are appropriate,



without people thinking you are affected. I love to say pleasaunce instead of backyard."

"I think we must all yield individual taste in small matters now and then, for it is a duty to be agreeable as long as it is consistent with one's conscience," said Mrs. Baird, taking Betty's hand and stroking it lovingly to take away any preachiness in her words.

"Now, mother," said Betty, laughing, "you know there is no danger of my becoming eccentric. Father said last night that young people were fond of experimenting."

"I must go now and get ready for our dory race," said Craig suddenly, starting towards the gate. "It begins at three o'clock. Aren't you and Betty and Lois coming?" he asked Mrs. Baird.

"Of course we'll come," cried Betty and Lois in a breath, while Mrs. Baird said:

"I shall be pleased to come. Shall we wear your colors?"

"I shall have a red jib," said Craig.

"Good! We'll know him by the 'cut of his jib,'" cried Betty. "We'll have red ribbons in some conspicuous place."

"But your life-saver is to sail in the race," said Craig.



## 90 BETTY BAIRD'S VENTURES

Betty clasped her hands dramatically.

"Ingratitude, that marble-hearted fiend, shall never dwell in this heart. I retract. I show no favors, not even for purple-top turnips and Early Valentine beans."

"Well, he did n't save your mother's life, nor Lois's, and I'll look for some red ribbons anyhow," said Craig.

Three o'clock found Betty rowing her mother and Lois to the yacht club-house, where they could sit on the veranda and watch the races. Betty was rowing in fine style. She was very fetching in her blue sailor suit, while her hair flew and blew radiantly in the brisk southerly breeze that was filling the spotless sails of the dories.

Seven dories were entered for the race.

"Look," cried Betty, leaning over the balcony rail. "Don't the sails 'way off there look exactly like A tents?"

"Look like a tense!" exclaimed Lois. "How do they look like a tense? And what tense, present, past, or future?"

"Goose!" responded Betty. "Present tense, of course. Are n't they present out there? And are n't we tense with excitement here? But don't you really know what an A tent is?"



"No, I don't," confessed Lois, "much to my present and intense sorrow and humiliation. Now, wise one, tell me what it is."

"An A tent, Miss Byrd, I would have you remember, is a tent whose front — and back, too — is triangular, like an A, and that is precisely what those leg-of-mutton sails out there look like."

"What vast learning!" mocked Lois, and bubbling over with fun the girls watched eagerly for the start.

Swiftly came the dories, tearing through the water before the freshening wind, as the starting-gun sounded.

"The red jib is leading," cried Betty, stretching forward excitedly to see, then quickly drawing back as she found herself obstructing the view of a very handsome and distinguished-looking woman of middle age.

"Please pardon me," said Betty, turning to her.

"Don't change your position, for I can see perfectly," answered the stranger. She smiled, and added, "I am watching my son's boat."

"That makes it more fascinating," said Betty, blushing as the older woman gazed into her face with evident interest.



"Do you know, I believe I have heard of you. My son knows you," said the lady, smiling brightly.

Betty looked puzzled. "I'd love to know him," she said, smiling too, yet somewhat at a loss for an answer; then she colored when she realized what she had said. She felt that this lovely woman's son would be well worth knowing, but that she had been too intense in her expression for conventionality.

"Yes, you know my son," said the lady, smiling kindly into the sweet face.

"May I ask his name?" Betty was at length driven to say.

"He's called Jack by nearly every one, — Jack Brooks."

Betty shook her head negatively, while she looked down at the water as if some recollection might be borne up to her out of its blue depths. It seemed positively rude not to remember him.

Mrs. Brooks saw her predicament and hastened to relieve her.

"You may not have heard his name. I shall be more circumstantial. You have a pony-cart and a frolicsome pony. Now do you remember?"

"Remember!" cried Betty, mirthfully. "Now



my mother will have an opportunity to thank you. She thinks I was not sufficiently grateful, and perhaps acted a little tom-boyish."

Both turned to Mrs. Baird, and Betty had barely time to name her mother and Lois before some one cried:

"They are rounding the stake-boat!"

Mrs. Brooks and Betty leaned forward in time to see Jack's dory come about in fine style and a few yards ahead of the others, the red jib of the Clammerboy a close second. In spite of her declaration of neutrality, Betty had come with the intention of waving a red ribbon for her favorite, but now, with Mrs. Brooks so near, she hesitated to display partisanship.

"Whose boat is that with the red jib?" asked Mrs. Brooks.

"Craig Ellsworth's. He is a boy of eighteen, a neighbor of ours," answered Betty.

"Then you must feel especially interested in him," Mrs. Brooks said.

"I did —" Betty stopped short in her explanation.

"Until you found I had a special interest," finished Mrs. Brooks, nodding appreciatively. "That is kind of you, but it adds zest to a race for the spectators to be divided, so keep to the



red jib, and I shall wave my Harvard colors for my son."

The dories ran close to the club-house, and Betty saw Jack look up to the balcony as his mother waved her cheering little flag. Then his eyes met Betty's, and she fancied she saw a look of disappointment cross his handsome face when his eyes fell on the flaming red ribbon, the color of Craig's jib, which was hanging from her hand over the railing.

The Clammerboy was close at hand and looking up; he, too, saw Betty, and before tacking waited a second to swing his cap in acknowledgment of the red ribbon, which she was waving vigorously.

Both boats had waited too long. The third dory, the one with the black hull, tacked briskly and sped away in the lead, with triumph written in every line of the triangular sail.

"Oh!" moaned Betty. "I made them lose! They looked up here and Craig waved his cap, and Mr. Brooks was so surprised to see us talking that he hesitated. Oh, dear!"

"Don't be worried, child," said Mrs. Brooks, "they are making up the lost time."

Mrs. Brooks was right. Slowly but surely the two dories overhauled the black hull, and when



the second round began they were drawing away from it, with Jack's boat still leading by a few lengths.

On the last leg of the course, however, Craig's superior seamanship was in evidence. For years he had made that harbor his playground. He knew every point where the tide was a hindrance, where a help; exactly how close he dared cut the point, which they must round, without grounding his centreboard; where the breezes were freshest, and where they were most likely to be reduced by the trees ashore.

This last leg was a beat against a breeze that was constantly stiffening, and in the handling of his boat that day, in tacking at the proper time, and in running her almost into the wind's eye, he won praises from the old sailormen who watched the race with that air of superiority which they always assumed towards these "amateur" affairs.

When his dory crossed the finish line, with three good lengths of clear water showing between her and Jack's boat, he was received with hearty hand-clapping from the balcony, and even more hearty cheers from the throng of small boys who lined the shores and who were especially delighted to see one of their own number beat



"the big bugs," as they expressed it. But none congratulated him more heartily and more sincerely than Jack Brooks, who caused him to blush furiously by wringing his hand and congratulating him on his fine seamanship, then insisting on presenting him to his mother.

In honor of his victory, Betty gave him the red ribbon she had been waving, and he declared that he never would use anything but a red jib thereafter.



## IX

### BETTY AND CRAIG

“**A**RE N'T you perfectly *crazy* about going on that cruise?” asked Betty of Craig, who was hurrying up to the veranda, where Betty sat reading the last copy of *The Garden Magazine*. “Your father told me about it last evening at the station.”

Craig declined the chair Betty motioned him to.

“I'm in a great hurry,” he explained, “for we leave at two to-morrow and I have everything to get ready. I must ship my clams and see to the garden. I came over to tell you about that spray for your grapes.”

“Oh, thank you! How kind, when you have so many things on your mind,” answered Betty, gratefully. “Can't I help you in some way?”

Craig looked very solemn, then, with a hearty blush, said:

“Why, Betty —”

“For pity's sake, Clammerboy, what's the matter? Why this perturbation? Yes, actually blushing!”



Craig laughed, but evidently found it hard to speak. He dropped down on the top step and twirled his red cap viciously, looking in every direction but at Betty. His face had a haunted, sheepish expression.

"That must be Dick Jervice's boat," he said, with a rapt look.

"Now, Craig, you might as well bring it out first as last," said Betty, firmly, "and not pretend you are interested in that old tub you have seen for years."

"Well, Betty, to tell the truth, I am not so glad to go out on this cruise as you seem to think."

"Oh, oh!" cried Betty, incredulously.

Craig threw down his cap disgustedly.

"It's those blamed — excuse me — swells who are going. They are all college boys and I am — well, you know I have not been fifty miles away from this island."

The bitter truth was out at last. Betty turned her eyes away, for they were filled with tears. She remembered those first weeks at The Pines when, straight from Weston, she felt so strange among those fashionable rich schoolgirls. How could she help the boy? She felt immeasurably older and wiser than Craig. In other circum-



stances she would have laughed him out of his sensitiveness, but her own experience was still too vivid in her mind to allow her to pass this over lightly.

"A gentleman is a gentleman everywhere," she began, rather tentatively.

"It is not being a gentleman, but — what is that you are always getting off? Being *au fait*? It is being up to social stunts and not feeling as green as that pine-tree and about as stiff."

"I know, I understand," said Betty, earnestly.

The Clammerboy looked at her half resentfully.

"No, you don't," he said, so emphatically as to be almost rude. "You had all those years at The Pines, where you learned everything."

Betty looked at him hastily. She wondered if she had been a bore, talking about The Pines. Had she been a trifle upstartish?

"I suppose I *have* talked a good deal about The Pines," she began, in a meek little tone that was to be changed instantly if she discovered malice in his remark.

"Yes, you have," he answered absently.

"Well?"

The lad glanced up in surprise.

"Well what?" he asked.

"I hate to bore people."



"Bore people? What has that to do with it?"

"You insinuated that I talked too much about The Pines, and boasted about what I had learned there."

"My, but girls are quick! I never thought of such a thing."

"Oh, well, then I'll forgive you, and we won't talk about it any more. What worries you most?" she continued, in a tone of high sisterly interest.

"Oh, everything they do is different from the way our Hobart boys do; the way they shrug up their shoulders and put their hands in their pockets. And they have their own way of talking, as you talk about 'playing on the campus,' and things like that. We all know they are your ways of saying college things. It puts me out not to know some of these expressions, and to have to answer back like a book."

"That new suit of yours is just the thing," said Betty, irrelevantly, trying to bring comfort.

The lad brightened.

"I thought it had that big, baggy, square look, like that Harvard fellow's who saved your life."

"Yes, and your new cap has the right look. Have you yachting shoes?"

"Yes, and new neckties, too."

"Not a red one, I hope," said Betty. "A red



necktie always gives me the impression that a boy wants to be real wicked and does n't know how."

"No, I did n't get a red one. I'll be all right on the boat, for I know as much about sailing as they do. More, maybe. The trouble is we are going ashore at several places and go to dances, and meet people — girls!" The despair in his voice was poignant.

"Well, you are not afraid of me," said Betty, encouragingly.

"You are different," said Craig. "There is no nonsense about you."

"Thank you!" she said. Betty was not sure whether to take this for a compliment or not. It did seem a little hard that at her age she could not inspire the same dread as these other girls, very likely younger, and not half as "up" in things as she was.

"Well, girls always like boys who keep off their hats when they are talking to them."

"These Yale fellows keep theirs on and smoke too."

"Not before ladies!" said Betty, scandalized.

"Yes, and the girls seem to like it," he said moodily.

"If I were in your place, Craig Ellsworth, I'd not be afraid of *such* girls."



"Who said I was afraid?" demanded Craig, embittered by his own puzzled state of feelings.

"Girls like an ironical smile. I have heard dozens of them rave over Reginald Hopkins, because he has that easy way and slow, ironical smile."

Craig looked bothered.

"I have n't time to learn anything new."

"No," said Betty, thoughtfully, "you would n't have time to learn an ironical smile. Anyway, it would n't suit you. But girls dote on it."

"If I only had the way Tom Hailly has, of answering people back as quick as lightning!" said Craig, dolefully.

"Repartee?" asked Betty.

Craig nodded despairingly. "Repartee!"

"It is n't necessary to talk if you listen. Every one simply adores a good listener. Girls are usually perfectly willing to do all the talking. Why, the most popular boy at Kip Academy — you know it is in the same town as The Pines — never said a single solitary word. He just laughed uproariously at everything we said. He would laugh and then wipe his face with his handkerchief. Every time he brought out that handkerchief I felt like a wit. Oh, he was simply fascinating!"



Now, poor Craig was the solemnest of boys and could have achieved the "ironical smile" in a much shorter time than this abandonment of mirth, this riot of laughter and bonhomie. He shook his head hopelessly.

"There, your shaking your head that way made me think of a plan. There was Timothy Wainright. We girls were awfully afraid of him. He certainly was the wisest boy at Kip's, and the only thing he ever did was to nod his head in that slow, thoughtful way, and that was as flattering as any laugh. We stood in awe of Timothy."

"He sounds like a jackass to me, eating timothy," said Craig, in his sombre, scornful way.

Betty laughed. "You are hard to please. I have brought out all my choicest wares and none suits your fastidious taste."

"I'd hate to pretend."

"It would n't really hurt you, Craig, to laugh heartily occasionally," said Betty, with candor. "It is, I should think, only a natural way to express your appreciation. As for being a good listener, that is common — or uncommon — politeness. Mother always tells me to forget myself when I happen to feel — feel —" Betty paused. She had hurt the boy's feelings before



by intimating that he was afraid, and now she feared to use the word "timid." "You know the way you feel now, unaccustomed," she finished.

"I think it's their slang and easy attitudes that make it hard. It seems priggish to stand stiff when they are so limber. I don't smoke either."

"I should hope not! Yes, it is hard to be on the outside of things."

They were silent for a moment.

"Of course you couldn't wear an overcoat with a fur collar," said Betty, dreamily, while she pulled a honeysuckle sprig, and twirled it absent-mindedly.

"A fur collar this kind of weather! What *do* you mean?" exclaimed and demanded Craig in one breath, wiping the sweat from his forehead.

"Oh, I was just thinking that men with fur collars on their overcoats somehow seem different. It would be the thing if you could, but of course you can't," she added hastily. "They make men look like ambassadors or actors."

Such wild conjectures were so distant from Craig's mental horizon that they did not even skirt it long enough for him to "come down" on Betty for her truly girl-like inconsequence.

"I know you don't care for popularity," resumed Betty, and Craig gave a snort of disgust.



“You simply don’t want to seem queer and attract attention. Really, Craig, if you are just as you are with me — only a little more flattering, perhaps — you will pass.”

“Then my manners are not altogether bad?”

“You have good manners. You always keep your hat off when speaking to a lady; you never sit when a lady is standing; you don’t interrupt when I am talking, — that’s nice of you, — and, above all, you don’t take out your watch before me. I think I can forgive almost any breach of manners sooner than that.”

“Betty, you are a good one,” said Craig, with genuine gratitude. “I feel better. I know you know the real thing, though you never have any airs. Neither has Lois.”

“Here comes Lois now. Is n’t she too lovely! You won’t find any one ahead of her. Which ear is burning, Lois?”



## X

### A RETURNED MANUSCRIPT

**D**EAR MADAM, — We thank you for the privilege of examining the accompanying manuscript, and regret that it does not meet our requirements. Its return does not necessarily imply that it is without literary merit and may not find a market elsewhere.

Respectfully yours,

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

Betty read through the coldly-courteous slip without a break, but at the end she swallowed quickly that lump in the throat that seems, in some mysterious way, to be the source of our tears. She ran up to her room, threw herself on the window-seat, flinging her arms on the window-sill, and cried heart-brokenly. Mrs. Baird and Lois, who had listened to the reading of the slip, remained on the porch.

“ Shall I go up? ” asked Lois, with solicitude.

“ No; it is better for her to cry out her disappointment alone. Yet how I long to run up and kiss away her trouble, as I did when she was a baby! ”



Lois went over to Mrs. Baird's side and smoothed her hair gently.

"It must be hard when you find the trouble too heavy for kissing away, but Betty will soon get over this. You know she never allows anything to 'down' her very long."

"I knew she could not possibly have anything accepted by the great magazines, but it seemed better to allow her to try her strength. Her greatest desire now is to help her father."

After a good cry Betty felt better. She wiped her eyes, and leaned out of the window to cool her face and smell the sweetness of the flowers. The old-fashioned garden came home to the young spirit as never before. It spoke to her of lives well-spent, even though they were lives that had had a narrow compass; the boxwood beaten by wind and rain, yielding up its bitter-sweet tang, was, to her fancy, the fragrance of their memories.

" 'Like strains of far-off music,  
So shall thy memory be.' "

"Like the fragrance of boxwood shall thy memory be. Such a solemn fragrance," she said, leaning still farther out to follow the box winding away to the white gate in prim, plump bunches.



Mrs. Baird and Lois waited.

Suddenly Mrs. Baird felt two strong young arms around her neck, and a cheek as soft and smooth as satin lying against her own.

"Mother, I do believe you are worrying. It is all right. I might have known how it would be. It was downright conceited to send anything there. I'll stick to my garden and preserves. Who would n't be contented with such a stock of goodies?"

"Dear, dear child," said Mrs. Baird, drawing Betty down on her lap.

"I am too heavy for you, mother. Let me lean my arm on your knee," said Betty. She sat down on the step, and, leaning her folded arms on her mother's lap, looked up into the tender face.

"Now this is comfy," she said; "but, Carissima, you must not take my disappointment so hard. I am going to make my way, see if I don't, and the old Atlantic, and the Pacific, too, can't keep me from succeeding."

"I felt all along that it was an impossible beginning, and it seemed cruel to let you try, only to be disappointed."

"No, it was not. As if you could be cruel! Anyway, I felt worse over the pickle failure. That seemed such a meek beginning that I could



not believe the envious god Success would 'call me down.' I must try and try again."

Betty sat up straight, with determination written on every feature, — on the mobile mouth so given to laughter, the daintily upturned nose, the firm, round chin, while it flashed from the dark eyes that laughed and cried at once, those deep wistful child-eyes that drew hearts to her.

"You see, I did get *My Mother's Cookery Journal* to publish something. I'll be more modest and stick to Katie's literature."

She laughed gayly and began at once to plan another article.

"Why, I may become an editor — who knows? — of one of those departments. Everything now is photographed, and I can take pictures, even if I can't write essays. I saw a notice of a prize of ten dollars in 'The Girl's Own Page' for photographs of the prettiest girl's bedroom. I shall send a picture of mine."

"Excellent!" applauded Mrs. Baird, delighted that Betty could begin again with such enthusiasm.

"It's the very thing!" cried Lois. "Won't we have fun arranging the room!"

"Scrumptious!" agreed Betty. "What do you



say to taking, in the picture, as much as we can of the book-shelves, my desk and the chest of drawers? Perhaps we can manage to get in the pretty dressing-table, too. With this prize I shall have made eleven dollars and twenty-five cents, minus stamps!"

"Counting the article on 'A Nook in My Garden'?" asked Mrs. Baird, who could hardly keep track of Betty's receipts.

"Yes. And I have n't the least fear of not getting this prize. Every one says my room is so attractive, and original, too, in many ways."

By this time Betty was standing up, all alive with energy, and her face, lighted by the lamp-light shining from the hall where old Katie had placed the student lamp, was bright and eager.

"It is so good to do things, mother," she cried. "I'll begin to-morrow and arrange my room to the best advantage. I must get the picture in before the middle of the month."

Doctor Baird, hearing their voices, came out on the veranda. Betty brought a shawl for her mother's shoulders, and together they sat in the cooling evening.

"This is indeed a marvellously beautiful spot,"



said the doctor. "I wish I had more time to enjoy it."

"Wait until I am one of the editors of *My Mother's Cookery Journal*," cried Betty. "Then you can give up going to the city and live out here all the time and write books, — Latin ones."

"That is a very attractive prospect, daughter," said the doctor, smiling affectionately on her and patting her head.

"Father," began Betty after a long silence, and in the dark her cheeks grew crimson, "they — *The Atlantic* sent back my essay on 'Twilight.'"

The doctor showed no particular surprise.

"Indeed! What do you propose to do now?" he asked.

"I sha'n't give up Literature for one disappointment," Betty declared. "No doubt I began too high on the ladder, and so I shall start on a more modest round, *My Mother's Cookery Journal*, and shall send a prize photograph of my bedroom."

"That sounds promising," answered her father, and the darkness hid the smile of pride he felt in her pluck and resolution.

"I shall go over my essays again and see if



there is not something that will do for the magazines. I am writing a short story. Dottie makes such a love of a baby heroine."

"I am indeed pleased to see that your zeal has not waned because of a single disappointment."

"Oh, I could n't give up, you know, for I love to write, and then in time something is bound to be accepted."

The next morning Betty and Lois studied the prize room from every point, in order to secure the most artistic picture. They put the chairs into new places, moved tables, shifted the magazines on the table, made the "literary table" more "literary," rearranged pictures and brasses, put flowers into quaint receptacles, and patted the pillows and threw them with studied carelessness on the window-seat.

"There!" exclaimed Betty, in a tone of finality, and she stood in the doorway and surveyed the results of their efforts. "I think that is simply perfect. Now, if I can get a good photograph of it I *know* it will win the prize."

"I am sure it will win," said Lois, with quick sympathy. "It is certainly the most charming room I ever saw, and how could it help being, with such an occupant?" and Lois ended with a profound bow to Betty.



“Flatterer!” said Betty, with a severely reproving look. “Now for the photograph! Now for the grand work of art from which Miss Elizabeth Baird, sometime of Weston, Pennsylvania, is to reap fame and fortune!”



## XI

### PRESERVES

“**A**RE N'T these too lovely for anything!” exclaimed Betty, warm and red from preserving her pears, — her “English Breakfast Marmalade,” — yet smiling brightly and proudly as she poured the golden syrup into the last jar.

The smell of spices and burnt sugar filled the room. A bee, attracted by the delicious odor, buzzed at a window.

“Your preserves are a beautiful color. They are like your grandmother’s. I can hardly believe you made them,” answered her mother.

“I hear father going out on the porch. I must call him and exploit his good fortune in having such a domestic daughter.”

Betty skipped to the door.

“Father, do come here and see what I have made.”

Dr. Baird stepped in rather gingerly. He never felt at home in a kitchen, and a man who could do any cooking he considered a Miss Nancy.





Ethel Pennewill Brown.

“ARE N'T THESE TOO LOVELY FOR ANYTHING!”  
EXCLAIMED BETTY”—Page 114







No Welsh rabbit for the old-time clergyman, no chafing-dish messes. There was a thick, high wall between the pursuits of the sexes. His face brightened with genuine pleasure while he gazed on the twenty-five jars of preserves towards which Betty pointed with a proud possessive hand.

"You are following in the footsteps of your mother and grandmother," he said. "Preserve-making is becoming an unknown art in these days of 'ready-made' stuffs."

"I shall soon be able to make your shirts for you, father," answered Betty, with a merry smile.

Everybody laughed, including the doctor himself, for he had never had a ready-made shirt, and declared that no gentleman of his young manhood had ever worn a pair of detached cuffs. This grievance with the dress of the present day had grown into a pleasant family joke, and Dr. Baird replied to Betty's chaffing by turning back his coat sleeves ostentatiously, displaying his handsome cuffs, as he took up a jar of preserves and held it to the light.

"I think you ought to give Mrs. Ellsworth a sample of your culinary art, also our pastor's wife," he suggested. He put down the jar, and gave the handsome group a last gratified look.



“Yes, I shall. Lois and I are going to the Ellsworths’ this evening, and I want to take one to Miss Hunt, too. We can go into the village to-morrow and take them to the manse and the library.”

“As you are going out, you might take a jar to that poor woman we heard about who lives alone there on the edge of the marsh,” Mrs. Baird said.

“I shall give John two or three bottles for his wife, for she has had a hard time all summer with sickness. Here is Lois. What do you think of them, Lois?”

“They are stunning, Bet,” exclaimed Lois, examining the preserves.

“I must save several jars for your father, Lois. He will be surprised that I can do things like this.”

“Father thinks you can do anything. I was almost jealous one evening hearing him laud you to the skies to one of his old friends, Colonel Mason. The colonel said he would like to meet such a paragon.”

“Did he call me a ‘paragon’? How delightfully bookish and old-timish? It gives me a romantic feeling about myself, as if I might have stepped out of ‘The Children of the Abbey,’



though, of course, I know it was only his gallant way of praising your friend."

"Of saying what we all think of you," added Lois, throwing her arms impulsively around Betty. Together they went out to the porch, Betty blushing under the fire of compliments, and arm-in-arm the two friends walked across the yard to the seat under the cedar tree, now jokingly called "Betty's Nook in My Garden," in honor of the one article that had been accepted.

"When do you think your article will appear in the *Journal*?" asked Lois, as they sat down.

"I want to buy several copies, — one for father and one for Colonel Mason, who is quite lonely in his great old mansion outside of Baltimore. Then I've told a number of people about your writing and I want to give copies to them. They all think it is so interesting. Then we must send them to Jess and the other Pines girls. Of course you will send one to Miss Greene."

"I am scared at the idea of Miss Greene seeing it. You know how artistic she is."

"She must have one, and indeed all the teachers must have copies, for they are proud of you."

"I don't see why they are. It's only your kind partial way of seeing it, Lois, darling, but it



would be a good idea to send them to our crowd to show the girls where we are. How I wish I could see Mary Livingstone! What a magnificent woman she must be! It seems strange to think of her as married. Of course you received an announcement of her wedding?"

"Yes. Have you seen her husband?"

"No; they went to Europe immediately. I have n't heard from her for a long time."

"Was n't it nice that she should marry Dorothy King's brother? They were always friends at school, though Mary was older."

It was a warm day, and the girls sat lazily in the shade of the old tree, talking over school days and the history of the months since they graduated. Snatches of conversation alternated with long, comfortable silences, while the friends intertwined ribbon-grass into necklaces or raved over the beauty of the Rose of Sharon, now in luxuriant bloom.

"From this distance the pink of the Rose of Sharon and the brownish gray of the trunk and branches make it like a real piece of tapestry."

Lois gazed with interest at the picture Betty pointed out. She knew that Betty was always seeing wonderful effects, and to-day's hazy at-



mosphere had so softened the flowers and trees that the likeness to an ancient bit of tapestry was not far-fetched.

“I never saw any one so delighted with effects as you are, Bet. You ought to be an artist. You are an artist,” she added.

“I sometimes think that I have the love and the emotions of one, but lack the skill. It takes more than appreciation to paint.”

Betty sat with her hands clasped about one knee, looking in serene enjoyment at a lapful of honeysuckle and roses which she had been putting together first one way, then another, as her fancy dictated. Over the dainty shining head Lois dropped the long ribbon-grass necklace she had braided.

To-day the two young girls formed a picture that gladdened every one who glanced into the old-fashioned garden from the roadway, — a picture of youth and health and friendship and beauty to an unusual degree; but, above all, the beauty that comes from character endeared them even to the casual passer-by.

They spoke in the subdued tones that the warm day naturally evoked, yet with a ring of merriment and good feeling. Betty was especially gay, possessing a sense of positive affluence, owing to



the twenty-five beautiful jars of pear preserves in the pantry.

The pillared house nestled placidly in the shadows of the tall protecting pines, — trees that had been growing there years before the now ancient dwelling had found its place beneath their heavy boughs. Humming-birds flitted with prismatic flash from flower to flower.

“Oh, the beauty of it!” exclaimed Betty.

Outside, a great red touring-car came puffing up.

“Look, Alexander, at that charming old house. Do stop, slow up!” cried one of the occupants, whose numerous veils almost hid her face. “I’m crazy about such houses.”

The car stopped, and the speaker, unaware of the two girls seated behind the cedar and further hidden by the great snowball-bush, continued:

“Alexander, it’s beautiful! I’d love to own it. Can’t we buy it? Let us go in and make them an offer for it.”

“Mary, what a child you are!” said a deep masculine voice. “How would you like some one to come to our place and beg it out of hand? We’d think it jolly fresh.”

“Alexander, you always show your profession



by your class of arguments," retorted the feminine voice.

Behind the tree Betty and Lois were laughing silently, and grasping each other's hands to keep from making any sign that they were there, for it seemed a good joke on that warm, lazy day.

The masculine voice made some response in a lower key.

"Now, Alexander King, don't be foolish," answered the woman's voice.

Betty started up. Lois tried to hold her down.

"You will spoil it all," she cautioned, in a whisper.

"It's Mary Livingstone," Betty answered, running quickly to the gate.

"Why, there's Betty Baird! Oh, Betty, Betty, where in the world did you come from?" cried the voice from the car.

"Dropped from the sky, just as you have, Mary Livingstone-King," Betty cried, with both hands outstretched, and, smiling brightly, she glanced towards the young husband, who was gazing open-eyed with surprise and curiosity. So this was the Betty Baird his wife and sister had talked about!

"By Jove, I don't blame 'em!" he thought. He looked at her more closely, for a more



radiant girl could not be found than Betty standing by the car, her great eyes dancing and deepening while she clung to her beloved Mary Livingstone's hand.

"Do get out," she begged. "Lois is here. Oh, Lois, it is Mary. We were talking about you when you came."

"Talk about angels," said Mr. King, with an admiring glance at his handsome wife, "and you hear the rustle of their wings, or, in this age, the tooting of their motor car."

"Indeed, I shall come in," said Mary, preparing to get out. "I have so much to hear about and to tell. Then, you know, I have a husband to show off."

"And, of course, Miss Baird, we have come to buy this house, whether you want to sell it or not, as you must have heard," said Mr. King, gravely, with a sly look at his wife.

There was a general laugh at Mary's expense.

"Well," said Mary, laughing, "I *did* fall in love with it at first sight, but of course I would n't take it from dear little Betty Baird." Mary threw her arm lovingly over Betty's shoulder. "How tall you are! I always think of you as small, because you were when you first came to The Pines."



They were now walking up to the portico.

"What a divine place!" she breathed, her glance going out to the water, then coming back to the shadowy garden.

"It's a bully place!" ejaculated Mr. King.

"How long have you been here? I am frightfully at a loss for news about my friends," said Mary.

"We came here about three months ago. I am glad you like the dear old house and garden. I miss my mountains. The water is a poor substitute."

"Have you a boat?" asked Mr. King. "There is bully sailing in this harbor and out in the bay, even if you don't go clear out to the sound. Play golf?"

Mary laughed.

"Now you see how we spend our time. We are either motoring or swimming or golfing or sailing or riding or driving. Once in a long while we read a book."

"That is fine and out-of-doorish. I am beginning to think I would rather be a good sports-woman than write a good book."

"Listen to our intellectual Betty Baird! Isn't that treason, Lois?" cried Mary, clasping the two girls' hands.



"Now, I'll call mother and have Katie make lemonade. Or would you prefer ice-water?" Betty asked.

"I vote for lemonade," said Mr. King. "It's deuced hot to-day, you know."

"Our hall is the coolest spot in the country. Won't you come in?"

"Yes, it will rest our eyes," said Mary, and they trooped in.

"Oh, this hall is ideal, perfectly ideal," cried Mary, and she dropped into a capacious antique sofa covered with restful green.

Katie, with her ample form swathed in a white apron and a red-and-yellow bandanna about her head, soon brought in a huge Canton-ware bowl, filled to the brim with the lemonade and a few additions in the way of fruit, according to a recipe of her own.

She put it down on the table, and Betty, with Mr. King's hearty assistance, opened a nest of little mahogany tables for glasses and cake dishes. Then old Katie, her uplifted chin denoting that she had a final test of "quality," brought in the prized sponge-cake.

"I never tasted such delicious cake!" were the words she heard from the beautifully dressed stranger, when she waited a moment behind the



door to hear the usual encomiums. Grinning with pride, she went, with as light tread as her two hundred pounds would allow, to prepare dinner.

Soon there was a quiet step on the broad staircase, and Mrs. Baird came down, in a cool and refreshing-looking gown of pale gray that, with her fast-turning hair, gave that air of gentleness and sweetness which was a part of her personality. She was delighted to see Betty's school heroine.

"If there is n't Jack Brooks!" called out Mr. King. A tall figure vaulted from the back of a superb black Kentucky thoroughbred at the gate, and hurried buoyantly up the path.

"Do you know him, Mrs. King?" asked Betty, laughingly bringing out the new name.

"Yes, Miss Baird," answered Mary, with emphasis on the name.

Betty went to the door, and opening wide the screen, shook hands cordially with the newcomer, saying:

"There are some friends of yours here, Mr. Brooks."

"Why, Jack, old man, where in blazes did you drop from?" demanded Mr. King.

"You'd better answer for yourself, old chap,"



Jack laughed back. "*We* are original Long Islanders, living in our ancestral home. Are you still in Westchester?"

"No, we have bought a place about five miles from here."

Betty clapped her hands.

"How lovely to have you near!" she said to Mary, and her voice spoke volumes.

"It is certainly delightful to find you here," said Mary, warmly.

"And Lois is going to spend a great deal of her time with us, and we can organize a regular Pines Club," said Betty.

"'A Pines Club'! What a sylvan sound! Is it for the preservation of our forests, that 'are being so ruthlessly —'" and Jack paused significantly in his jocularly.

"I am sure, Mr. Brooks, that I told you that we had attended The Pines, a boarding-school on the Hudson," answered Betty, smiling.

"Would you admit men to your club? At least, you will Alexander and myself, as honorary members."

"That's good!" cried Mr. King, pounding his knee. "I'd like to see Jack Brooks a member of a girls' boarding-school club."

That raised a laugh.



"I should like to know on what grounds Mr. Brooks thinks he ought to be made an honorary member?" asked Lois. "We may have other applications."

"Lois, you surprise me. For heroism, of course," laughed Betty.

"Heroism! Jack Brooks a hero! Well, that's a good one! Jackie, old man, what heroic stunt have you been doing?" asked Mr. King, jovially.

"'T would ill become me to speak of my small services," responded Jack, bending his head low in mock humility. "Ask Miss Baird."

Betty related graphically the details of the incident of the runaway pony, the recital causing great hilarity.

"I believe, Jack, that you frightened that pony purposely," said Mary, gleefully. "It will be the fashion to have pony-cart accidents, if you two tell this story often."

"Where were you, Miss Byrd, when all this was going on?" asked Mr. King.

"Fortunately I had not come yet. It would not have been half so effective with two heroines."

"Let me warn you not to go out alone in that cart. I see another adventure in Brooks's eyes," Mr. King answered.



During this raillery Betty asked Mary to go upstairs to see her room, since she had admired the downstairs so heartily.

Soon the two friends were in the window-seat.

"Don't you get lonely out here? You always had a crowd around you at The Pines," Mary asked.

"Yes, it was lonely. Only grown-up things and people everywhere, until Lois came, and you know I never pretend to be grown up. I used to long to hear some one laugh the way Jess did, that nonsensical giggle, that we teased her about. Mother and I are great friends and it was only occasionally I felt the need of being downright silly. Then I have a good way of keeping busy. I am — making money!"

"Making money," said Mary, in surprise. "How can you, out here?"

"I am working on 'The Next Thing' principle, doing the thing nearest at hand and it's perfectly delightful. It makes you feel so strong and valuable in the morning to get awake with some project in your mind."

"What are you doing?" asked Mary, interested at once.

"It is principally —" Betty hesitated, blush-



ing over the confession, "principally Literature."

"Literature!"

"Now, Mary, you said that just the way father does!" Betty tried hard to look vexed, but the interest in the subject was too appealing. "Yes, L-i-t-e-r-a-t-u-r-e!" Mary laughed as Betty pounded out the letters, and she gave her hand an understanding squeeze. "I got a dollar and twenty-five cents for an article in *My Mother's Cookery Journal*."

"That is a beginning," said Mary, encouragingly. "We must begin at the bottom of the ladder."

"My, Mary, how old marriage makes a girl! That, too, is exactly what father said."

Betty threw her arm over Mary's shoulder to take away, in one of their old schoolgirl hugs, any irritation that her laughing words might cause.

"I'm three years older, you must remember, Missy," Mary answered loftily.

"Well, I don't care if you are married and three years older, I shall love you as much as ever."

"Thank you," said Mary, dryly, with a twinkle in her eyes at the attitude Betty unconsciously



assumed towards her, as of one wholly superannuated by the mere fact of being married and consequently unable to enter into the aspirations and delights of a girl in the blissful state of singleness.

"You are the same Mary, and there is no one like you except —" Betty cried out, catching the twinkle.

"Now don't begin your conscientious exceptions, Betty," Mary protested. "It would take too long and would destroy my comfortable feeling of supremacy."

"I love your irony! There is no one like you in that," cried Betty.

"What are you about now?"

"I made pickles, perfectly lovely little pickles, and sold them, — that is, some of them," finished Betty, in a rather subdued tone.

"Now that was fine!" exclaimed Mary.

"Ye-es," Betty hesitated. "But I barely cleared myself."

"I thought there was money in such things. I am sorry."

"Oh, let us not talk about it, for I have a fine new scheme. A boy on the next farm is helping me with the garden and I am going to make money out of that."



"There is one thing you can do, Bet," said Mary, looking around the room thoughtfully, "and that is, arrange a room artistically."

"I am glad you like my room. I love it up here."

"It is beautiful. And your house is one of the most attractive I have been in. There is a harmony combined with originality that one seldom finds."

"Mary, you take my breath away," cried Betty.

"We have a new house — you will come to see me soon, won't you? — and we paid a professional decorator, a New York man, to furnish it, and yet it lacks the 'look' your house has. Perhaps you could tell me what is wrong with it. I know when a thing is wrong, but how to remedy it is beyond me."

Betty was not at all abashed at the confidence expressed in her powers. Absolutely without conceit or vanity, she yet possessed limitless enthusiasm and buoyant spirits that always saw success ahead whether she or someone else was to carry out the enterprise. Success gleamed only a short distance away even while she wiped her eyes over a present failure.

Many girls of Betty's age were old or cold or



tired; Betty was always hopeful, always eager, always seeing something wonderful half hidden below the commonplace. It was this fire or clear shining quality like star-mist that gave Betty her peculiar charm. People smiled at her enthusiasm but warmed themselves at its fire.

Miss Hunt grew young and rosy as Betty talked by her side, though she felt she should curb the young heart's high courage and hopes. The Clammerboy felt that Harvard and Heidelberg were only matters of a little waiting and working when he and Betty talked their long talks of the future, the Future that capitalized itself as it came from their young lips.

Even Jack Brooks was beginning to see that there was something in the world besides the opportunity for self-amusement. "I must pick up in my studies," he confided to Betty, "for this is my last year at Harvard, and I could n't look you in the face if I flunked." Yet such was her fortunate temperament that in hitching her wagon to a star, she was never lax in the practical details of the wagon and the hitching.

And here, with her first talk with Betty for nearly a year, Mary was feeling the old charm and glow. Her own home seemed different. She wondered how she came to give it into the



hands of a professional decorator when it was such a delight, as Betty found it, to do it for yourself, to plan and study and hunt. Yes, Betty must come and help her to understand.

Silence had fallen between the two, while their minds flew to the new home.

"I shall try to come soon, Mary."

"Will you drop literature and everything else just to come to look over my house?"

Betty reddened. "Forgive me, Mary, if I did not seem eager to go. I have so many irons in the fire that I do feel a little dazed. I have *had* to turn from one thing to another until I feel like that awful Example, the Rolling Stone. Then Craig Ellsworth says girls never stick to a thing long enough to give it a fair test."

"Why, you were always noted for your perseverance, Betty. Then you surely have n't given up l-i-t-e-r-a-t-u-r-e?" spelled Mary.

Betty bubbled over with laughter. "It's frightfully slow — except the rejection slips. Look here." Betty showed her a box holding every slip she had received from the magazines.

"Frankly, Betty, you are too young for l-i-t —" But Betty had her hand over Mary's laughing mouth before another syllable was spelt.



"I must go," said Mary, starting up, and they ran down to the hall, where there was a great buzz of conversation.

"You won't want us to come often, Mrs. Baird, if we take up the whole day."

"It has been the greatest pleasure to have you," answered Mrs. Baird, earnestly, taking Mary's hand and holding it cordially.

"Oh, Mary, before you go you must see my pear preserves," cried Betty, dragging her out into the kitchen, while the others followed.

The dainty, delicious-looking fruit was admired as extravagantly as any one could wish. Betty wrapped up several jars for Mary as well as for Mrs. Brooks, and, with many cheery jokes about "sweets to the sweet," Jack galloped off. A few turns of the crank and the Kings were speeding down the road.



## XII

### THE AUCTION

“**L**ISTEN to this!” cried Betty, rushing into the room where Mrs. Baird and Lois were sitting, Lois at a big table writing to her father, and Mrs. Baird engaged with her mending.

Betty flourished a copy of *The Hobart Weekly Herald*.

“Do everybody stop everything and listen to this!” she went on, sitting down, while her shining eyes wandered over the pages in search of the particular piece of news with which she wanted to electrify them.

She proceeded to read a long advertisement of an auction to be held at a farmhouse not far distant, at which were to be offered for sale livestock, farm implements, household furniture and utensils of all sorts.

She stopped, all out of breath, and looked from her mother to Lois to see the effect of the advertisement.

“Well!” said her mother.



"Well!" said Lois.

"Well!" sniffed Betty. "Have n't you people any imagination? Can't you see in these words, old mahogany, old brass, old pewter, old samplers, old everything that I love and need for this blessed old house with its hundred-years-old shingles?"

"I own to seeing nothing but cattle, horrid cattle, that browse on your field and bellow and snort and — *gore* you," said Lois.

"Really, though, does n't this advertisement in our weekly stir you? I'm crazy to go, and you will go with me, won't you, Lois?"

"Have I ever deserted you?" demanded Lois, with a reproachful expression in her fine gray eyes.

"No, you have n't, so come now and let us make up a list of the things we need, for I am sure they will have everything and they will go for a song," answered Betty, pulling Lois up from her chair and skipping her out of the room.

The yard of the old ramshackle farmhouse was filled with people from the country around; innumerable horses were hitched to the trees by the roadside; and the barn overflowed with men in their Sunday clothes, examining the livestock and talking solemnly together, discussing the late



Van Steert's peculiar theories of peach culture and cattle-feeding.

Women with babies in their arms sat on all the available steps and on the grass beneath the trees. Others wandered through the house, gossiping and peering curiously into every nook and corner of the shell that had, for many years, concealed their unsociable neighbors. A host of children clattered up and down the staircase and played tag in the dismantled rooms, as if something in the wreck of a well-ordered home satisfied their lawless little souls.

Under the horse-chestnut tree in front of the house were tables piled high with dishes, carpets, curtains, stovepipes, and small articles. The Van Steert home was laid bare to the community. It was like a judgment day. The old rooms looked pallid and worn, as if sick of the glare of the day and the curious eyes.

Betty and Lois drove up in the pony-cart.

"Look!" cried Betty, seizing Lois with one hand and with the other pulling the pony until he stood on his dainty hind legs.

"What is it?"

"See that slope-top desk?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Lois, it is exactly, *exactly* like the picture of



one in that book about old furniture that Miss Greene had at The Pines!"

Betty's cheeks grew red and her eyes brilliant. She tied Merrylegs to a post and walked hastily up to the porch, for the sight of the desk and the crowd was already giving her the genuine auction fever.

"Look at that pewter plate! And that blue pitcher! And those tall brass candlesticks! Perfect loves, every one of them!"

Betty spoke below her breath, but her smile was rapturous as she picked up the different articles.

"I have no doubt they are all good," Lois replied, "but for the life of me I can't feel much interest in old things, except in a few we have at home that belonged to our own people."

"Of course inherited things are best," said Betty, with her eyes fastened on the desk, "but somehow, when it comes to furniture and brasses, all grandmothers of the colonial days seem as near to me as my own ancestors. It is not family sentiment or pride when it goes so far back, but a love for the days, the atmosphere, the beginnings of our country. Oh, I can't explain it, but it's the way I feel."

"There's the auctioneer!" interjected Lois.



A tall thin old man took his place behind a table under the horse-chestnut. The crowd gathered about him, well within hearing of his powerful voice. He first offered for sale a somewhat battered teapot. No one would bid above five cents, and his ruddy face assumed an expression of pained surprise at such unappreciative bidders.

He next tempted them with a lot of three, a teacup, a picture, and a frying-pan. They went for ten cents! Grief settled like a cloud on his countenance, but was lifted when a chromo fetched a dollar, though he spoke sorrowfully of the condition of a people who would allow art, Art, to go at a song.

Yet, evidently not absolutely hopeless, he took up a long-handled mahogany apple-butter stirrer and held it aloft.

“This here stirrer has been in the Van Steert family for many generations. What am I bid for it? Will some one gimme a bid for it?”

He paused and gazed about him, the expectation in his face gradually giving way to the habitual one of aggrievedness when there was no response.

“Shall I bid?” whispered Betty to Lois. “It must be good, from the way he talks.”



"What on earth would you do with it?" asked Lois, with a hint of practicality, though she too was beginning to feel the contagion of the auctioneer's enthusiasm.

"What? No one bid on this genooine old antique stirrer that for years and years has stirred apple-butter right in this here yard?"

He threw reproachful glances on a generation dull to the promptings of sentiment.

"Five cents!" said Betty, in a low, frightened voice.

"Five cents!" The tone was positively withering. "Five cents for the stirrer that Gramma Van Steert stirred her apple-butter an' her peach butter an' her pear butter with under these very trees! Five cents! Is *that* all I'm offered?"

Betty blushed and hung her head. Lois turned pale. What a fearful mistake they had made! Every eye was fixed on them. The auctioneer flashed lightning-like scorn under his penthouse brows.

"Five cents!" Oh, the irony and pathos of those words!

"Ten!" called a bold masculine voice, and instantly every head turned.

Betty was rescued; she drew a long breath of grateful relief.



How the people had stared at her, and every eye reproached her for offering five cents, only five cents, for Grandmother Van Steert's apple-butter stirrer! Now those baleful eyes were turned on the man on the edge of the crowd, to whom the stirrer was finally knocked down at ten cents.

Nimbly, and apparently whole-heartedly, the auctioneer went to the next lot, the pair of fascinating candlesticks.

"I am going to get them for your mother," breathed Lois, in a low tense whisper.

"*Lovely!*" whispered back Betty, not turning her eyes from the brilliant objects.

After spirited bidding, the brass candlesticks were knocked down to Lois for one dollar and seventy-five cents. Then Betty, for forty-five cents, secured the pewter plate she had seen. By that time the girls were thoroughly possessed by the auction fever. Every movement of the auctioneer's hand, every change in the tones of his voice, as he pleaded or scolded or cajoled, or praised the things he was selling, incited them to bid.

One would bid excitedly on nearly every article offered, until the other would bring her to her senses by insisting on her withdrawing



from a contest for anything so useless. But invariably the other would bid the next time, until she in turn was persuaded to desist. Thus, with one comparatively cool head between them, they contrived to get through a number of sales without having made a purchase. Then the slope-top desk was put up.

"Now, ladies and gen'l'men," the auctioneer shouted, "now I'm about to offer you one of the most vallable pieces in this here whole c'llection, Granpa Van Steert's old desk. Take a good look at it," and he waved his arm invitingly towards it, as two men lifted it up on the table where all could see. "Thar it is," he continued. "Jest look at them handles on there, brass they are; an' there's three big drawers, made o' good solid oak, too," he assured them, as he pulled one of them out and pounded it convincingly with his fist. "An' in there," and he let down the lid, "in there is a lot o' little drawers, an' here's where ye write. Fine desk, that is, solid as a rock. What am I offered?"

He turned briskly to the crowd with an air of confident expectation.

"One dollar!" cried a man off to the left.

"One twenty-five!" instantly came a feminine voice.



Then there was a brief pause.

“What!” the auctioneer exclaimed. “One twenty-five! Is that wat I ’m offered for Granpa Van Steert’s old desk? Look at them big drawers agen. You could put a hull lot o’ things in them drawers, now I tell you. An’ look at them nice little drawers to put pins and buttons and sewin’ things in. An’ there’s a place for pens and for ink. I have n’t a particle o’ doubt, ladies and gen’l’men, that it was at that very desk that Granpa Van Steert writ that famous piece of his’n that was published in *The Gen’l’men Farmer* about twenty-five or thirty year back, on peach-tree culture. I mind that piece well. An’ to think that to-day I ’m acshally offered one twenty-five for that desk! Somebody offer more. Shorely there’s some one here who’d give more than one twenty-five for that old desk. Won’t some one offer me five, at least?” he pleaded.

He looked searchingly into the faces nearest to him, and catching Betty’s eyes he said, nodding encouragingly, —

“Make it five.”

Involuntarily Betty nodded in return.

“Thank ye, miss,” he said. “Five I ’m offered, five — five — five — five I ’m offered! Anybody make it six? Do I hear six?”



"Six!" called out the man on the left.

"Six I'm offer —"

"Seven!" Betty interrupted him, half rising from her chair. "I'll go up to ten but not a cent more," she said to Lois, and she sank back.

"Seven-fifty!" a feminine voice called.

"That's the one twenty-five woman," whispered Lois.

"Nine!" shouted the man on the left.

"Ten!" instantly cried Betty, standing up, entirely regardless of the necks craned towards her. Lois rose at the same time, with a curious expression.

"Twelve-fifty!" offered the man on the left.

Poor Betty, her high hopes gone, collapsed into her seat. Lois remained standing, and moved behind Betty's chair.

"Now this is something like!" exclaimed the auctioneer, and he fairly smacked his lips over the unexpected bid. "Twelve-fifty I'm offered, twelve-fifty, twelve-fifty! Somebody make it fifteen."

Lois raised her hand slightly, so that Betty could not see, and inclined her head.

"Fifteen I'm offered," the old man cried, almost joyously. "Fifteen dollars, fifteen, fifteen I'm offered. Somebody make it sixteen!"



Am I offered sixteen? Fifteen I'm offered! Anybody make it sixteen? The bid's 'gainst ye, mister, won't you make it sixteen?" he asked the man on the left.

The man shook his head.

"Nuh, you can count me out," he grunted.

"Fifteen I'm offered, fifteen, fifteen! Any more offers? At fifteen going — going — gone at fifteen to the young lady over thar!" he finished, pointing his long finger in the direction of the girls.

"Let us go, Lois. I don't want to stay any longer, do you? Someone back here got my desk. I wonder who could have taken that desk from me?" groaned Betty.

She jumped up and started away.

"I'll stay here while you get Merrylegs ready, Bet," Lois answered. "Wait for me. I'll be there in a minute."

While Betty was preparing for the drive home, Lois hurriedly paid for the desk and arranged to have it sent to Doctor Baird's house early the same evening.

Betty and Lois occupied the dinner hour telling about the bargains they had seen at the auction. Betty could not quite get over losing the desk.



"It was beautiful, mother, and *such* a bargain!" she kept repeating.

"I am sorry you could n't get it, Elizabeth," said her father.

"Oh, Betty wanted everything there, Doctor Baird," laughed Lois.

"*You* have very little to say," answered Betty. "You bid on an old broken cup and saucer."

"I still believe it was Lowestoft," Lois maintained.

"It's queer, father, the way it takes hold of one," Betty said reminiscently. "I felt I had to bid for *everything*. Everything seemed *so* cheap and desirable! That old auctioneer has wonderful magnetism."

"It takes a good deal of dramatic ability to be a successful auctioneer. I sometimes drop into the auction rooms on Fifth Avenue when passing, and I have been amazed at the gift one of the auctioneers possesses. It is worth while going simply to hear him. He's a brilliant man."

"I don't believe I'll *ever* miss another auction," said Betty.

"Leave your purse at home," her father advised her.

Rising from dinner they wandered as usual



to the front porch and were talking over the day, when Jack Brooks rode up on his black horse.

“What is that long thing he has over his shoulder?” asked Lois, who was the first to see him.

He dismounted at the gate and marched up the path to the little group, with “Gramma Van Steert’s apple-butter stirrer,” decked with white and blue ribbons, sloped over his shoulder.

Every one stood up, laughing, when he halted at the steps.

“After many years of wanderings in strange lands,” he announced, in a sing-song voice, “I have found the golden apple-butter stirrer. May I lay it at the feet of the most renowned and noble Lady Betty, famous and beloved for her peerless pear preserves?”

Betty stepped forward with the dignity of a ladye fayre in the days of chivalry, receiving her knight errant. She bowed slowly, low, and very graciously, then extended her hand and took the implement, holding it erect as if it were the standard of a mediæval army.

“I thank thee, most exalted, most brave, most excellent one, for this noble deed, for the offering of this gorgeous and transcendent Apple-butter Stirrer.”



With another gracious bow Betty turned towards the house and then, dropping her regal manner, began swinging the ladle swiftly round and round, and the white and blue of *The Pines* swirled out in the breeze and she started to sing, soon joined by the others, —

“Here’s to the dear old Pines!”

Like a flash Lois snatched a crimson cord from a cushion and tied it to the stirrer. Jack bowed double in acknowledgment of the compliment to his university, while the girls started in with “Fair Harvard.”

As the evening was cool they went into the hall and John brought logs for the fireplace, where they added their merry crackle and sparkle to the gay company. College songs were sung, and even the Doctor’s deep voice joined loyally when Betty opened his own college song-book, accompanied sometimes with the piano, sometimes with Lois’s guitar.

While the gayety was at its height there was a banging at the brass knocker and two men carried into the hall the desk that had fascinated Betty at the auction.

“Why, that’s my desk!” she cried. “But it does n’t belong here,” she added, turning to the men who were straightening their backs from the



load. "We didn't buy it. You have made a mistake."

One of the men looked at the tag.

" 'Miss Betty Baird,' " he read. "That's you, ain't it, Miss?"

"What does it mean?" cried Betty, looking from one to another until she came to Lois, in whose eyes she saw the explanation.

"You —" she began, but could not finish, for Lois was at her side with her arms around her.

"It's a birthday present, Betty. I was so glad to find out what you wanted. When you stopped bidding, I began."

"Oh, you darling!" cried Betty, kissing her. "It is too wonderful to believe."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" Jack Brooks exclaimed.

They turned to him in surprise.

"Why, what is wrong, Mr. Brooks?" Betty asked.

"Was it you that was bidding on that old desk? I didn't care for it myself, but if I had known you wanted it, Miss Byrd would n't have had a ghost of a chance."



## XIII

### “ WE REGRET ”

**B**ETTY sat brooding under the cedar and watching, half-unconsciously, the side of the house on which fell, this early September day, the shadows of the Lombardy poplar, growing thin and wavering. The lily leaves, where the Madonna lilies had bloomed palely in the shadow of a sunken stone wall that divided the flower-garden from the meadows, were curling and brown.

Summer had gone! And with the summer had gone her hopes of doing anything to help her father. He must carry the burden of the mortgage alone. How much better if she had been a boy and could put a shoulder to the wheel!

A whiff of late honeysuckle came to her. She turned listlessly to see where it was hidden, and found it among the Virginia creeper that encircled a dead tree. She pulled out a spray and held it to her face.

“ It does n’t stop blooming, even if it is hidden away among the gorgeous creepers, apparently



of no use!” she said aloud; but the philosophy did not help her.

Betty was heartsick. Half an hour before she had gone blithely into the pantry to take her preserves to the grocer. To her dismay she found only half a dozen jars where, a short time before, twenty-five had reigned. It took away her breath. What had become of them? Gradually she put this and that together, a gift here, more gifts there, until “F. O.,” Friendship’s Offering, had consumed them. There could be no income from her pear preserves. That was settled! Like the pickles, they had failed.

Upstairs, on the “literary-looking” table, was a pile of rejection slips. Literature, too, had failed! How easily one of those rejections might have been an acceptance! She had tried hard. She had written faithfully on every subject that she could think of, she had photographed everything that had artistic value, she had written and rewritten essays; yet in flowed rejection slips in unbroken succession.

Mrs. Baird and Lois were in the city and, alone, Betty felt more than ordinarily the oppression of failure in all her efforts. A cow lamented in the distance. No one was in sight. John had taken Merrylegs and driven into the village for feed.



The sunshine grew paler on the ancient shingles, and even the crimson butterfly that floated in the open could not mitigate the pallor of the approaching autumn evening.

Her garden? Yes, perhaps that was a success. Her mother and her father often praised the vegetables that had come from it. But would she make any money out of it? She had sold a good deal of produce to her grocer. She probably would sell more. Possibly she could make something from the garden. At least, it looked hopeful.

John broke into the midst of her thoughts by coming up with several letters. Two she recognized at once. They were long, well-filled envelopes with three two-cent stamps on each.

"More 'we regrets'!" she exclaimed, dispiritedly opening them.

Each contained a rejection slip as freshly agonizing as on that first day when "Twilight" came back. There was never even a line of encouragement. Betty could have bloomed on a personal letter from an editor, but the hopelessness of these impersonal notes always made her heart sink and sink; and to-day, with her empty pantry shelf and two slips to add to her quaint collection, she felt a physical weakness come over



her. She tore the slips into tiny pieces. She would save them no longer. She was done with Literature!

Betty opened the letter marked “Hobart.” It contained an itemized bill for fertilizer, seeds, and garden utensils. The sum-total made her gasp. In the light of these terrible figures the garden was the worst failure of all!

“Oh, this is too much!” she cried aloud. “There is some mistake. It never rains but it pours, but not like this in real life. There must be a mistake.”

She read the bill over and over again carefully, and a look of intense pain crossed her face. Then suddenly she ran to her boat. She had forgotten her oars. No matter. She would paddle with the steering oar she kept in the boat, anything to get away for a while. The harbor was calm and Betty’s boat drifted idly with the tide.

Nature, with her smiling mood of water and sky, was evidently not sympathetic, and poor Betty looked up into the sky with troubled eyes, asking some solution to the world-old sorrows and anxieties of life.

“We regret!”

A flock of birds hovered over her a second and then sped swiftly across the water. Betty could



hear "we regret" in the sound of their chirpings and pipings as they scurried by. Little waves washed against the boat. Betty paddled absently.

Everything she touched turned to failure. Why was n't she a boy? There was the money due on the house this month, and she had heard sober conferences between her father and mother about ways and means. She knew they were harassed, and here she was, not only useless, but adding to their troubles by this garden bill.

Betty's grief was very genuine and oppressive. The young have no perspective; they lack that experience which gives a sense of proportion. They cannot compare one ill, one sorrow, with another and say, "This is a trifle compared with that which I have passed through." So to-day, when Betty, with all the power of her young, generous heart, longed to help her father, came this blighting failure, with no gleam of hope to lighten it. Every door was closed to her.

She threw down the oar and, resting her elbows on her knees, she covered her face with her hands. She would drift with the tide. It soothed her to be out in the open between sky and water, with the boat rocking with the waves. A soft breeze sprang up and urged it on and on. How calm it



was and silent! No sound reached her ears save the lapping of the water against the side of her skiff. Without opening her eyes she slid down on the bottom and rested her head upon the pillow on the seat.

For a long while she lay there, so absorbed in her thoughts of failure that she was oblivious to the changing scenes above and around her, until she felt the boat rock with a quicker motion. She opened her eyes and sat up. The wind had changed from south to west and had blown her far from shore.

The cloud in the west, at first no larger than a man's hand, had grown threatening, and zigzag clouds low over the hills met it with a terrible power in their torn purple edges. The wind from the north sped across the water and roused it from quiet ripples into waves that shook her light craft into shuddering motion.

Betty jumped up quickly and, with her short oar, paddled vigorously towards home. She soon saw, however, that she must make for the nearest shore if she would escape the storm that promised to break any minute. The yellow sandbar that thrust itself out into the water was the nearest patch of earth. With quickened strokes she turned towards it. The blinding lightning, flash-



ing at briefest intervals, the terrific crashes of thunder, and the violent pitching of the little boat, were enough to make a stouter heart quail; but bravely she struggled on, and at last, breathless and almost exhausted, she reached the bar.

Hastily she leaped out of the boat, flung the anchor ashore, and hurried to a group of scrub pines, the only protection, poor though it was, within sight. Scarcely had she reached them when the storm broke about her. There she was, alone, not a house or a human being in sight, the torrents of rain but slightly broken by the trees under which she stood.

The squall passed as suddenly as it came, leaving the sky clear and the hills of a still deeper green. The blue water, no longer vehement, murmured of the dangers passed.

Dripping from head to foot, with each golden-brown lock curled tight in the downpour, her face pink from the plashing of the rain, her dark eyes glowing from the thrilling experience on the lonely sandbar, Betty was like some water sprite as she sprang into her boat and sculled for home, hoping that she had not been missed by old Katie, for 'it was too early for her father and mother and Lois to have come back from the city.



“Hello, there!” she heard a clear boyish voice call. Betty turned and saw the Clammerboy rowing swiftly towards her.

“Why, where have you been? You look like a —”

“A drowned rat. Don’t be polite. I know just how I look. Only it would be prettier to say mermaid,” interrupted Betty, laughing nervously, happy to see a human face and hear a friendly voice.

“But where have you been?” insisted Craig.

“Oh, watching the storm from a splendid position, the sandbar,” answered Betty, nonchalantly pointing to her late refuge; but the poor girl’s heart was fluttering and she hid her exhaustion with difficulty.

“Were you out in that storm?” asked the lad, incredulously.

“Yes. Don’t I look like it? I’m very — at least, I watched the storm with much interest.” Betty, feeling on the verge of a breakdown, was determined to allow no pity that would precipitate it.

“Gee whillikens!” muttered the youth, while he gazed at Betty admiringly. “Say, Bet, you must have been scared.”

Betty tossed her head. Knowing Craig’s un-



favorable opinion of girls' bravery, she certainly would not confirm it.

"It was a glorious sight. It made all my worries so small — for the moment," she added, for a sense of her old failures began to creep over her as she approached the shore.

"What have girls to worry about?" demanded the boy.

"Well, if you had had three letters — no, two letters and one awful, perfectly awful bill — sent to you in one afternoon, you would know what girls have to worry them," said Betty, indignantly.

"What were they?" he asked, with characteristic directness.

"Two began with, 'We regret' — odious way! And the other" — she felt this would floor him — "for fertilizer and seeds and things."

"Pooh!" scorned the boy. "You ought to see my bills. This is scientific farming. You put everything into the soil, you enrich it, you use the best seeds, you have the best methods. It's scientific. It's the only way!" he cried enthusiastically.

Betty felt her heart warm. It could never remain indifferent to the ideal. Yet certainly his admissions were damaging. "Put everything



into the soil!” She had wished to get a few things from it. Was the game worth the candle? Was it enough to be simply scientific? She feared she had a petty soul, though thus far the “doing” held a large part in her plans and endeavors; the ideal had not even now sunk to where she could see mere figures only. She brightened visibly until his next remark roused her.

“As for literature,” he went on loftily, “it takes years and years and years to do anything.”

“How about pickles?” Betty snapped, too tired to be long transcendental.

Craig’s exalted look fell. He saw Betty shiver and, like the dear boy he was, he swung his boat up to hers, jerked off his coat and put it round her despite her protests.

Then, tired and worn, her chest heaved under the boy’s coat, and, bursting into tears, Betty lost all hope of being the Paragon of her sex in his eyes. Yet those eyes were very tender as he looked at the bowed head, and he kept saying, “Now there, I say, now there!” until Betty laughed and cried together.

As the two came to the shore, Jack Brooks passed in his car with his mother.

“Look, Jack, there is that sweet pretty girl I talked with at the dory race, — your little girl,



Miss Baird, you know," cried Mrs. Brooks. Betty, dripping and forlorn, walked slowly up the shore, followed by Craig Ellsworth.

"By George, it is, and soaked through, evidently out in that terrific storm," replied Jack, and he stopped the car with a jerk. In a moment he had leaped out and was running to Betty.

"What in thunder —" he began, and stopped. Betty laughed.

"That's just it, in thunder, lightning, and in rain."

Mrs. Brooks leaned out to the limp girl.

"Get in, and let us take you home," she said.

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Brooks, I am soaking and would ruin everything. I have only a short walk," cried Betty.

Jack simply took her by the arm, and before she knew it she was in the seat beside Mrs. Brooks. Craig, on Jack's invitation, sat in front with him.

"Poor, poor child!" soothed Mrs. Brooks, her gentle blue eyes soft with sympathy. "How did it happen?"

"I was paddling alone, and slid down on the bottom of the boat and closed my eyes and drifted too far."



“How reckless!” cried Mrs. Brooks. “You must be more careful in the future. Promise me,” she added tenderly, for she felt a strong attraction to the young, impulsive girl by her side.

“It was foolhardy, wasn’t it?” admitted Betty, with a candor that never failed her in any contemplation of her own mistakes. “I shall certainly promise.”

As they rode up to the Baird home Mrs. Brooks cried out:

“I did n’t know *you* lived here, in this Eden. I have often admired it. It’s an ideal situation, looking off to the Sound. And what a delightful garden!” Mrs. Brooks grew more and more enthusiastic as they came to the porch. “Look at those fan-lights! It’s simply —”

“Great!” interjected her son, who enjoyed making his dignified mother use his own language occasionally, and she never failed to be shocked as he hoped.

Mrs. Brooks remained in the car, while Betty and her two knights walked up the dusky garden.

Katie, hearing voices, came round the house, and Craig told her briefly about Betty’s escapade, and, without ceremony, the old cook hurried her



pet indoors, where Betty was soon drinking hot tea to the monotonous scolding of the affectionate old woman, who pattered to and from the kitchen on her errands of mercy to the "naughty chile."



## XIV

### BETTY VISITS "UNCLE" GOLDSTEIN

**B**ETTY was baking. Her sleeves were rolled up, and her white dress was almost completely hidden by a blue gingham apron. The quick, skilful movements of the graceful hands and white arms seemed part of the dancing sunlight of this bright September morning.

As Betty kneaded and tossed and cut and patted, she sang hummingly for a while, then her voice broke out in trills; again, as the work grew more intricate, she fell into soft whisperings and low-murmured tunes; when she lifted her head from the table and moulded the doughy loaves into final shape, a burst of song broke forth as if it had been imprisoned. Mrs. Baird could almost follow each step of Betty's progress by the notes she heard. Sometimes, with songs gay and happy, she lilted like a bird; but usually, because of long association, she sang some grand old hymn that she had been "brought up on," as she put it.



Betty had learned to bake bread under old Katie's direction. It was only a few weeks from the first trial that Katie asked Mrs. Baird:

"How 'd you all like de bread dis ev'nen', Miss Helen?"

"It was quite as good as usual, I think, Katie," answered Mrs. Baird, unsuspectingly. "Mr. Baird said again, as he does so often, that no one can make bread like you. Why do you ask? Did anything go wrong in the kitchen?"

For answer Katie put her hands on her hips and laughed until the window-panes fairly rattled, and Betty and Lois came running out.

"'Scuse me, Miss Helen," she finally said, when she stopped to take breath, "'scuse me, but —"

"Did you tell mother?" Betty broke in.

"Jes' gwine to tell 'er, honey, when you all bust in. Dat bread, Miss Helen, was done baked by dis young sprig here. I di'n' do a ting but watch, an' mighty little o' dat."

"You baked that bread, Betty, dear?" questioned Mrs. Baird, incredulously.

Betty nodded her head very proudly.

"I did it with my little hands," she confessed. "We did n't tell you, for I wanted to see what you and father would say."

"Your father will be delighted, Betty," said



Mrs. Baird, who herself was far from showing any depression over Betty's new accomplishment.

From that time no one's bread but Betty's would satisfy Dr. Baird, and to-day she was again exercising her skill.

“Betty,” called her mother, standing in the doorway, and smiling as she always did when she saw her young daughter well and happy. She stood a moment, watching Betty's agile motions before she again interrupted the bread-making and the song. In her hands she held a letter, and, glancing down at it, she went over to Betty, and, putting her hand over her mouth, kissed her on her cheek to make her aware of her presence.

“If I were not so floury, Carissima, I'd give you a hug, for my bread is coming on beautifully.”

“Don't let floury hands control your enthusiasm; I know how pleased one is when baking is a success. And my dress will wash.”

Betty threw her arms around her mother, taking care to hold out the whitened hands so they would not touch the pretty morning dress.

“This is loving under difficulties,” she exclaimed, transferring a spot of flour to her mother's cheek from her own, and then trying to wipe it off with her floury hands.

“Dear me, why can't I learn to bake without



making such a mess," cried Betty, taking up her apron and rubbing the flour off.

"Never mind, child, I have something to discuss with you. When you have finished your baking we will go out on the porch."

"What is it?" asked Betty.

"A letter your father received last night. It is important and will take a little time."

"Now, let's be off," cried Betty, and she slammed the stove door and fanned herself vigorously with her handkerchief.

"It does n't seem fair to discuss these financial matters with you, Betty," said her mother, as they sat down on the porch chairs. "Your problems will come soon enough. I want you to have a bright memory of your home after we are gone." Mrs. Baird smiled pensively. "However, I think you should have a voice in settling this, as it will concern you largely."

"Now, mother," said Betty, with that air of thorough practicality she assumed when any one was low-spirited, "I love to 'wrestle' with a difficulty, and my memories hanging in my memory's hall will be as sunny as apricots on the sunny side of an old red wall, even if we do have troubles. 'Such are my troubles, Mr. Wesley,' said the man when his maid dropped coals on the floor. Maybe



the ‘troubles’ of the Baird family won’t seem any more serious to future generations. Now, let us have a heart-to-heart talk about debts.”

Betty slid to the porch floor and stretched herself comfortably by her mother’s side.

Mrs. Baird was laughing, and the lines between her calm eyes disappeared while her daughter talked on in her light-hearted way.

Betty saw that she had accomplished her end, and sat up a trifle more dignifiedly.

“This house must be paid for. The interest and taxes and insurance are eating into our salary,” she began nimbly, like one reciting a lesson.

“We are buying this house for our old age,” explained her mother, looking serious.

“Well, so far as I can see, we shall have it for our old — very old — age. When does old age begin most virulently?”

“When no one wants you around,” said Mrs. Baird, with simple directness.

“Why, mother, that sounds bitter,” said Betty, looking into her mother’s face, with its gentle dignity and delicate refinement.

“No. I merely mean that there will come a time when your father will be superannuated, and then we shall need a home and a place that will,



perhaps, yield a little income besides. Your father loves to potter round a garden, only he never has had time."

Betty smiled to herself. This legend of her father's love for an out-of-door life had been faithfully handed down to her, but in her rather unfeeling youth she firmly believed that he loved his study, with its old books and pictured faces, beyond any garden or orchard, and that this myth would one day be exploded.

"Your father is fifty," said Mrs. Baird, after a long silence. "His hair is quite gray and —"

"He is not growing the least bald," interrupted Betty, hopefully. "His hair is so thick, with a beautiful pepper-and-salt effect. He does n't look a day over forty."

"But to return to our financial difficulties," said her mother, smiling.

"But to return to our debts, our husband and father who wants to potter about the garden," supplemented Betty. "I have a plan. I found ten books in the library that tell of hundreds of ways of earning a living, a *superb* living, at home! It's so encouraging. Listen!"

Betty picked up one of four books she had thrown on the porch table that morning.

"Home-made furniture! It looks as good as



any ‘boughten’ stuff. Home-made! Made at Home! Here’s this book on Hammered Brass Made at Home! And listen to this. One girl made a handsome — notice, handsome, not ugly — income by making old-fashioned rugs. Made at Home! I could do any of these things. Here’s another book that tells of two hundred and thirty-seven ways of making a living.”

Mrs. Baird smiled as Betty ran on, turning the pages and showing the pictures of the made-at-home products.

“There should be no cause for discouragement, surely, but, unfortunately, our trouble now is one that demands an immediate remedy, my daughter.”

“Oh, what is it, mother? I thought it was only the general situation. I am glad it has narrowed down to something that means fight.”

“This letter says that the husband of your father’s sister (who died five years ago) is dead, leaving an only child, — a girl six years old. Your father must go on and see about her and bring the child here, unless there are some of her father’s relatives there to take charge of her.”

“Oh, mother, I’d love to have a little girl live here!” cried Betty, clapping her hands in glee.



"That is the point. Will it interfere with you? I want you, dear Betty, to make the choice."

"I'll go for her myself, the darling. I love Dotty, and this little thing will be our very own."

"I thought you would decide it that way. Now, here is the other trouble. It will take sixty-five or seventy dollars for your father's carfare and hers. We have n't the money, and as yet we don't see where it is coming from. I could give up Katie, but that would be cruel. She has always lived in our family. John works the farm on shares, and we have had small returns. His bills for improvements, silos, fencing, and so on, have eaten up the income. I never knew a farm that needed so many fences. We pay for his labor."

"John is an old skinflint. I'll keep an eye on him," said Betty, jovially. She had not reached that age where the failings of others tend to embitter or to blind one to one's own faults.

"If we can get through this winter," her mother resumed, "I think we can do better next year. But *how* can we get this extra money to bring little Edwyna here?"

"Edwyna! What a funny name! I'm sure she'll be as funny as her name," exclaimed Betty.



They were silent a few minutes, when Betty broke out impatiently:

“Oh, mother, how hard it is that horrid old money should come up as the one indispensable thing at every turn! It is n’t just.”

“Yes, little daughter, but I am seeing even now that there are compensations. How few mothers of the rich could talk with their children, as I do with you, and receive sympathy and understanding!”

“I’d have every bit as much sympathy and understanding, Carissima, if I had a hundred dollars this minute,” Betty answered. “Lois would lend it,” she continued tentatively. “You know she is determined to pay board.”

“Your father would never consent to borrowing from her,” said Mrs. Baird, firmly. “Don’t worry, Elizabeth. I simply wanted to keep you informed of how our affairs are going, especially when introducing a stranger into our home. Now I must go upstairs and finish my work.” Mrs. Baird kissed Betty lovingly and went into the house.

Betty soon followed, going to her own room to think out a plan. There she sat for a long while, pale and tense, looking down into her clasped hands. She shook her head slowly, from time



to time, dismissing one plan, then another, as impracticable. The deepening lines on her smooth forehead and the firm pressure of her lips showed that she was thinking with the determination to solve the problem. She glanced at her "literary table." Oh, if she could only write something! At the thought, she shook her head vigorously. No hope there!

While thinking, she was playing with her ring, and as she turned it, and it flashed and glittered in the light, she regarded it almost mournfully. The ring was a charming one, given to her by her cousin when she graduated from The Pines. It contained a large pearl surrounded by small diamonds. Betty knew it was valuable.

"If we only had the money this cost! And there is the wonderful diamond that mother gave me that belonged to grandmother, and the locket with the pearls and diamonds. We have pearls and diamonds, but no dollars. I wish I could sell them, but I can't sell an heirloom or a gift."

She flashed the ring round and round. By association, her mind went back a year or two, when all the girls at school were reading "All She Hath," by a popular writer. A scene in the book stood out before Betty's eyes. The poor



wife, in abject poverty, with her husband sick at home, was pawning her wedding ring.

With a jerk Betty started to her feet, and a bright smile came to her face. Why not pawn her ring and the locket and—if necessary—her grandmother’s diamond ring, too? Several times she walked up and down her room, saying, “I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” Then she ran to Lois, crying:

“I have it! I have it!”

“What have you?” asked Lois, looking up with interest from her desk, and expecting to see at least an acceptance slip in Betty’s hand.

“I can’t go into details now, Lois, for I must make plans. We need seventy dollars, and I am going to pawn my ring, and maybe other things, too. We must go to the city to-morrow with father. You heard Jack tell those interesting stories about the boys pawning.”

“Oh, Betty, but not ladies!” cried Lois.

“Yes, ladies most of all,” Betty answered authoritatively. “Why, have you forgotten that perfectly lovely lady in ‘All She Hath,’ who pawned her wedding ring? We all cried then.”

“I remember. It was very, very sad,” answered Lois, thoughtfully. The sad memory



did not seem altogether heart-breaking, for she quickly looked up at Betty with a pleased smile. It *was* romantic! "I wonder if I could n't pawn something, too? How would this do?" she asked, and she glanced over her rings and selected one with a choice pearl.

"Of course you could. And that ring is the very thing," assented Betty, heartily, now full of the flavor of the dramatic side of their troubles. Her happy young imagination soon alchemized difficulties into delightful adventures.

However, they had a very serious conversation. Lois insisted on lending the money and wept at Betty's refusal. She determined to get ahead of her proud friends, who gave all in hospitality, yet refused to see any obligation. Indeed, they could not see it, for it was a privilege to have Betty's friend with them.

"Where are you going?" Lois asked. "Have you the address of a reliable place?"

Betty held up a pawnbroker's business card.

"Jack Brooks gave it to me the other night as a souvenir. The address is on it. He said it was a safe place and in a sufficiently respectable neighborhood, as he expressed it. Was n't it curious that we had that talk about it? Mother was so interested in his clever manner of imitating



his ‘uncle,’ as he called the pawnbroker. Now her poor daughter will have an ‘uncle.’ ”

It certainly would have been sad, if Betty’s face had not been wreathed in smiles, as she spoke in pensive tones. Lois laughed, and they began to make preparations for the visit.

When the two girls had minutely planned the expedition, Betty told her mother. At first her mother’s horror almost overwhelmed Betty, but when she had promised to take all precautions, and to run no risk, Mrs. Baird gave her consent, since there was no other way out of the difficulty, and it was impossible at that time for any one else to go.

The next day the two girls went to New York with Dr. Baird, and, after making arrangements to meet him at luncheon, they left him. Almost stealthily they studied the piece of paper with Mr. Goldstein’s address before asking a big policeman how to get there. At last they were fairly started on their errand and sat in the cars shivering with excitement. Betty had the precious belongings carefully hidden. She feared they would be stolen, and the girls watched every one suspiciously.

After leaving the car and walking a short block, they entered a narrow, crooked street filled with



the din of a city's poor district and the sights and sounds that prosper under dark, overhanging houses. Fortunately, they had to walk but a few steps down this street until they reached the place Jack Brooks called "At the Sign of the Three Golden Goose Eggs." Involuntarily glancing around to see if they were observed, they hurried through the doors that opened quickly and noiselessly, as though to conceal their entrance.

Everything, they noticed, was planned to hide the confusion of the client. They walked into a small room, and going up to the counter Betty faced a short, wizened man, who proved to be Mr. Goldstein himself. Much to Betty's surprise, he looked very human. Far from being an ogre, the old man was very much like other men.

He pointed her to a stall jutting out into the room, where she and her transactions would be completely hidden. It was done quietly and secretly, — a secrecy not lacking in charm to the two trembling girls. The pawnbroker called the number of the ticket belonging to some one else through a little barred door that stood at the head of a flight of steps. Evidently the vaults were under the sidewalk.



“How thrilling!” thought Betty, and she shivered luxuriously at the thought of subterranean vaults, at her first taste of the makeshifts of genuine poverty. It was all immensely more romantic than genteel poverty, where people pinch along, yet have to maintain an appearance of prosperity.

Mr. Goldstein made a close examination of the stones, and Betty received sixty-five dollars, — forty on the locket and twenty-five on her ring.

Again in the street car, Betty and Lois were soon comparing notes on this new experience.

“It was n’t half so terrible as I anticipated. I expected to see broken hearts and tearful ladies all about the place,” laughed Betty.

“Why, the old man was — almost — nice!”

“No Shylock, surely,” sighed Betty.

“That reminds me of the interest. How much must you pay?” asked Lois.

When they went over the business side of the transaction, and calculated the interest charges carefully, they soon saw that, while it was an easy way to get money, it was by no means a cheap way. In fact, it was evident that the interest would, in a comparatively short time, equal the principal, and their dismay was overwhelming.



"I shall take the tickets back right away," Betty said despondently.

"No, you can't. You need the money at once. There will be some way out for the interest. You have done it for the best," comforted Lois.



## XV

### EDWYNA FROM THE WEST

**T**HE next Saturday Edwyna was to come from the West with Dr. Baird to her new home on Long Island. Betty went to meet them at the station. As the train stopped, she scanned the passengers who were pouring out of the cars. At last the tall, spare, dignified figure of her father appeared, and stepping down he lifted a small black bundle of a child to the platform.

“Oh!” said Betty. “How tiny! As tiny as Dot!”

The little girl bent down, gravely smoothing out her dress, then lifted her head and looked at Betty, whom the doctor had pointed out from the window. She gazed long, never taking her eyes off the smiling face of her newly-found cousin. Betty nodded again and again, but Edwyna only stared at her, until, suddenly growing shy, she hung her head, and would hardly look up.

“Give me a kiss, Cousin Black Eyes,” cried Betty, as the child climbed sedately into the cart.



Edwynna turned her thin face up for the caress but did not answer it. She was suffering from an attack of bashfulness.

"You must be horribly hungry, Edwynna," said Betty, holding the wee hand in hers; then she turned her attention to Merrylegs, for she saw that the child was too keenly alive to her new surroundings to speak.

As they drove along in silence, Betty steadily keeping her eyes off the mite at her side, she felt something warm on her arm. Glancing down out of the corner of her eyes, she saw that Edwynna's head was bowed and tears were trickling from the olive cheeks to her sleeve.

Very carefully, and as though unconsciously, Betty put her arm back of Edwynna, and there, in the soft curve of her new cousin's arm, she wept silently, yet soon, to Betty's joy, with comfortable little sighs. Before long the tired child was asleep, and Dr. Baird carried her out of the cart and up to Betty's room without waking her.

Betty tiptoed around, and in an hour Edwynna opened her eyes and sat up in bed. As yet, Betty had not heard the sound of her voice.

"Your hair is like my dolly's," came a high, shrill voice from the bed.



At the first word Betty ran to the child, and, sitting by her side, drank in the amazing conversation.

“My dolly’s name is Minerva. Father called her Minerva because she was so smart; she can shut her eyes and cry if you squeeze her very, *very* hard, and her legs and arms move up and down; she can sit down. You will dote on Minerva.”

“I am sure I shall dote on Minerva. She must be a very bright lady to do all those things,” Betty exclaimed, nodding her head energetically.

“Father said Minerva was a smart lady,” confirmed Edwyna. “Can you sing? I can.” And Edwyna began, in a thin, high-pitched voice, to sing:

“‘ Shall we meet beyond the river,  
Where the surges cease to roll ?’

Mrs. Siggins taught me that,” she announced.

“Good!” cried Betty, clapping her hands. “Now I’ll wash your face and we shall have some dinner.”

“Don’t you want me to sing ‘Pull for the Shore, Sailor’?”

“Not now, Edwyna, for it is dinner-time, and your uncle must not be kept waiting.”

Edwyna was silent. She was always silent



except when inspired by some topic of deep interest, and then she could not be kept quiet. She loved her dolls "madly," as Betty said, and had little else to talk about with this strange cousin. She looked at Betty's belongings with well-bred restraint, and Betty wondered if Mrs. Siggins had also "taught her manners."

At dinner she ate in silence, but whether from habit or shyness or homesickness no one could tell. She was very thin and delicate-looking, and the plain black dress accented her appearance of orphanage. Her hair was long, inky black, and perfectly straight, and her eyes a deep black.

It was decided that she was to sleep with Betty until she felt more at home, then she would have one of the rooms opening out of Betty's. When bedtime came she knelt by her bed for a long time, and when Betty went to her she found her fast asleep, clasping in her arms a small, dirty rag-doll. She must have smuggled it into her dress and held it there through all the journey, and no one could tell what comfort and companionship the lonely child had found in her doll from home.

Betty lifted her so gently that she only sighed and turned over on her side. Then, clutching the doll and smiling, she lay quiet.



Blue Monday!

"Surely this is the equinox," cried Betty. She looked out of the window and saw the wind and the rain pelting the late flowers and bending the tree branches. The window-glass was more like old-fashioned crinkle-glass than the brilliant panes that Katie kept in dazzling condition.

Little Edwyna sat up in bed rubbing her eyes a moment or two, then turned and buried her head in the pillow, crying and sobbing until Lois came running barefoot to see what the trouble was. Betty flew over to her, and, snatching her up, began walking up and down, she and Lois talking soothingly and trying to divert her. Edwyna cried on in a loud, hearty way that seemed more natural than the silent tears of the day before. Betty walked with her until the sobs ceased, and Edwyna crawled out of her arms onto the bed and began to suck her thumb.

"It was the rain, Betty," Edwyna whispered, as Betty carried her downstairs. "Father is out in it." The baby lips trembled, and Betty, kissing them, had only time to whisper:

"No, pet, he is not there. Your father is in heaven, where they don't have pouring rains like this; only gentle showers, I guess, that make the flowers and the grass grow."



Lois and Mrs. Baird were bringing in the breakfast, for Dr. Baird was late, and Betty, putting the dictionary on a chair for her little cousin to sit on, began to help the homesick child.

"Now, what shall we do on this rainy morning, children?" Betty turned to Lois and Edwyna with her funny little smile that already Edwyna was beginning to treasure and to smile at in response.

"I have a box of marshmallows. Let us go into the hall and toast them at the fire," proposed Lois.

"That is the very thing," cried Betty.

Lois vanished upstairs, and brought down a large box of the sweetmeats.

"Come, let us go at once," Lois said, "unless there is something we can do here, Mrs. Baird."

"No, thank you, Lois; there is nothing at present."

They found a fire blazing on the hearth, and with the red and the green apples shining from a Sheffield basket, and snowy cubes of delicious marshmallows ready for the long silver toasting-fork, the hall was so cheerful and cozy that they forgot the dreary sky and torrential rain outside. Soon the hall was filled with the delicious savor of toasted sweets, followed by the more pungent



fragrance of roasted apple. How the appetizing smells and the crackling logs and the dancing firelight seemed to mingle and fuse to give out autumnal good cheer!

After they had eaten the apples and the marshmallows, Betty proposed a game.

“What shall it be, Edwyna?”

“Let’s play lady,” Edwyna answered.

“How do you play it? Maybe we don’t play it the same way.”

The child looked elfishly wise as she answered:

“I used to put on papa’s big coat and gloves, — I turned in the fingers, — and I wore Mrs. Siggins’s apron for a trail. Mrs. Siggins was the lady that scrubbed for me and papa. Then I’d call on Mrs. Siggins and on Minerva, and then on the authors in the parlor.”

“The authors?” queried Betty.

“There were a lot of men and ladies sitting and standing, and all of them were so nice and kind looking. They would look at me and listen when I talked to them. One lady had long curls.”

“Pictures!” said Betty to Lois, in an undertone.

“I wish you would make me a bride,” said Edwyna. “I saw a bride in church, and she



walked up this way, with a long veil," and she paced with measured step up and down the hall.

"Lovely!" cried Betty. "And there is a beautiful long, long veil in the closet I am going to get for you." She went to the closet and fished out several yards of old mosquito netting, which the two girls draped artistically over the child's head.

"Oh, you darling thing!" they cried, kissing her.

Edwyna stepped demurely to the measure of the wedding march that Betty played on the piano, then ran out to the kitchen to show her finery to Katie, then upstairs, and brought down Minerva, for whom again she had to march up and down the hall.

"Now, what next?" cried Lois, as Betty left the piano.

"Edwyna has n't seen The Duck, my beautiful Blymackfoot. He is a duck to be sure. Wait!" Betty cried, and ran out of the hall door.

"There she goes, without a thing on her head," said Lois.

"Here she comes," cried Edwyna, her nose flattened against the window, and excited over the prospect of seeing the duck that was a "perfect duck."



Betty's hair was glistening with raindrops, and her cheeks were like young apples in a shower.

"You must be wringing wet," said Lois, reproachfully.

"The storm is over. It is only drizzling now. I love to feel the rain on my face."

Betty was smoothing Blymackfoot's ruffled feathers.

"Perfect little duck of a duck, now be good and show off for the lady. Blymackfoot is lame, but only a little. See its black feet. That's why I call it Blymackfoot."

Edwyna looked puzzled.

"Bly-mack-foot! Bly-mack-foot!" she repeated, slowly.

Betty and Lois laughed hilariously.

"No wonder you don't understand it," said Lois. "It is one of Betty's little whims that are very, very hard to understand until they are explained very clearly indeed."

"Trust me, Edwyna, and list not to the words of mine enemy. Thus it was. At first I called him 'Black-foot.' Then I changed that to 'My-black-foot.' Then I switched the letters around — as I often do, for words are a heap funnier transposed — to 'Bly-mack-foot.' That's simple enough."



"Tell Edwyna how you found him," said Lois.

"Sit down, I prithee, sweet bride, for, like the Ancient Mariner, I have a long tale to unfold," said Betty, pointing to the great chair by the fire.

Edwyna entered into the play and sat down sedately. The duck was wobbling around, much to her delight.

"It has n't much of a history, poor Blymack-foot," Betty said compassionately, taking him in her arms. "One day I was down on the bridge, looking at the water. I was horribly homesick, just as you are now, Cousin Edwyna."

"I'm not," interrupted Edwyna, emphatically. "I was yesterday, terrible, but I'm not now."

"Well, sweetie, I'm glad you are not. And don't you be homesick again ever. To resume the thread of my discourse. I was homesick, as I said, — and as Mistress Edwyna *is n't* any more, — and I spent half my time that first week mooning around the water. Well, I heard a splashing and a laughing and I looked around, and there I saw two boys persecuting this duck, this perfect duck. I ran to them as fast as I could and ordered them to stop. The big hulks jeered at me, asked if it was my duck, said they had found it and they would keep it and treat it as they



liked, and no girl could keep them from it. I grabbed the duck and, quick as lightning, I was running down the road to our house, with them after me. I met the miller and asked him about the duck, and the boys slunk away. Thus Blymackfoot came into my life. I love Blymackfoot. He's very intelligent and has great versatility."

Blymackfoot's biography finished, the three, and the perfect duck, went to the piano to sing. And how they sang! Little Edwyna could sing any tune that Betty started, for the child had a throat like a bird's. She knew a great many hymns, for her father had taken her to church since babyhood.

Betty brought out the family hymnal, and their fresh young voices sang the hymns sung through generations,—“How Firm a Foundation,” “Rock of Ages,” and others.

Then came “Zion's Hill.” Betty noticed that Edwyna did not join them.

“Can't you sing it?” she asked, after the first stanza, looking down at the child in surprise.

Edwyna hung her head and remained silent.

“What's the matter?” asked Betty, briskly.

“You said —” The child stopped.

“Go on. I said what?” Betty urged.



"You said a swear word," finished Edwyna severely.

"A swear word!" exclaimed Betty and Lois, simultaneously. "A swear word!" they repeated wonderingly.

"You said 'confounded.' I know it's a swear word, for William used it, and Mrs. Siggins 'rected him every time."

Peals of laughter greeted this explanation.

"Oh, oh! You mean 'All her foes shall be confounded!'"

Edwyna sat up straight and her pale cheeks flamed.

"Mrs. Siggins says 't ain't polite to laugh at people."

Betty caught her in her arms.

"Mrs. Siggins is right," said Betty, trying to keep her eyes meek and her mouth from smiles. "No doubt Mrs. Siggins is right about everything. Admirable Mrs. Siggins! No, it is not polite to laugh at people. But, Edwyna, please forgive us this time, and won't you be a little weenty teenty laughy yourself, sometimes? Lois and I are."

Thereafter they waited breathlessly for Mrs. Siggins's nuggets of wisdom, shortened by Betty to "Siggins's Nuggets." Betty gave Edwyna a



penny every time she handed out one of these stored treasures. It was the signal for inevitable laughter, and Edwyna, who, childlike, grew to think that to produce such hearty laughter was something to be proud of, soon lost all sensitiveness, and appeared aggrieved if her remarks did not send Betty off into joyous exclamations.

Edwyna quickly became one of the household, and in time Mrs. Siggins grew fainter, much to Betty's regret, for she had begun a division in her Commonplace Book, next to the one for Original Thoughts, which she had headed, "Siggins's Nuggets."



## XVI

### MISS HUNT'S MISSIONARY LOVER

ONE afternoon Betty sat in her favorite corner of the little public library. She could see far down the long, rambling street, and when she lifted her eyes from the magazine they were rested by the tall trees and the dignified homes that lined the roadway.

Betty now studied the magazines conscientiously. She no longer skipped descriptions nor read for amusement. Time and again she had been disappointed in her literary efforts, but recently there had been a delightful break in the habits of her obdurate editors. She had received ten dollars as a prize given for the picture of the most artistic and appropriate bedroom for a young girl, and shortly afterwards two dollars and a half for a picture and description of the handsome antique writing-desk Lois had given her.

Her old enthusiasm was fired, and day by day Betty studied and wrote for the papers and journals. As Dr. Baird subscribed only for the more



literary ones, Betty went to the library to read the popular periodicals.

Miss Hunt was in her place behind the desk. No one else was in the room. The graceful librarian, in her customary lawn, — for the autumn was unusually warm, — with its indefinite pink flowers, her fast whitening hair lying softly on her forehead in natural waves, her face bright and flushed from the animated conversation she and Betty had carried on about Home Missions and Literature, was smiling to herself as she pasted labels on a pile of new books.

Betty was reading an article on "Pumpkin Color as a Background for Mahogany" in *The Domicile*, when two pretty girls, about her own age, came in laughing and whispering, and handed their books to Miss Hunt. The librarian looked from the two faces bending over the books on her desk to where Betty sat reading.

"There is a young lady over there who is new to our village," she said to them, nodding slightly towards Betty, "the daughter of Dr. Baird, a Presbyterian minister. She came home from school in June."

The two heads were turned somewhat indifferently towards the window where Betty was half hidden by a pillar.



"Why, it's that awfully *chic* girl we saw yesterday in a pony-cart with another girl who was stunningly dressed," said one, Edyth Banks, a slender maiden of eighteen, whose light fluffy hair had a tendency to flow gracefully over an oval face with the complexion of a May blossom.

Her companion was of medium height, her eyes of a limpid brown, her hair, parted in the middle, adding to the classic effect of her regular features. There was, however, as much attention to the prevailing styles in her severe tailor-made suit as in the airy gown of her friend. Her name was Gertrude Lynn.

Gertrude had an overweening respect for style, or good form, in appearance, and the nameless little things that make up the index of a certain small and often very unimportant division of society. She did not desire to know any one who did not have some claim to the "best society," consequently she hesitated when kindly Miss Hunt said she would like to introduce them to the new girl. Quickly she summed up Betty's credentials in dress and appearance for entrance to the sacred coterie of her little village.

Edyth, with a democratic spirit that comes from attending a large college, had given no thought



to Betty's social qualifications. She wondered whether she had time for another acquaintance; but, good-hearted and genuine as she was, and with a healthy girl's love for friends, she at once accepted Miss Hunt's invitation.

Betty, wholly unconscious of their scrutiny and that her social fate hung in the balance, was startled by their approach, and glanced up with her eyes full of surprise, and her cheeks colored prettily when she heard Miss Hunt giving the names of two unknown girls. Coming out of her book world, Betty extended a friendly hand to them, while Miss Hunt withdrew to look after the wants of a visitor.

"You have not lived here long?" asked Edyth, sitting down on the bench next to Betty, while Gertrude sank on a chair and arranged her gown in classic folds.

"I came here in June, after graduating from The Pines," answered Betty.

"The Pines!" repeated Gertrude. "Did you ever hear of a Miss Livingstone there?"

"Do you mean Mary Livingstone?" asked Betty, tossing her magazine on the table and bending forward eagerly.

"Yes, Mary. She has married —"

"She married Dorothy King's brother. She



and Mr. King are now living near here. And you know them?"

"I know Mrs. King slightly."

"Why, Mary was one of my very best friends at The Pines. She was a senior my first year, but she was awfully good to me. Dorothy was in my class."

"How interesting!" exclaimed Edyth. "I, too, know the Livingstones. It proves how small the world is." She laughed as she uttered the hackneyed comment.

"And it proves how interesting the world is," cried Betty, joyfully. "I am so glad to meet friends of Mary."

"We are not old friends, though we know each other pretty well," explained Gertrude.

"If you know Mary at all, I feel that I know you," said Betty, and she smiled so happily into Gertrude's eyes that the formal girl forgot her conventionality and pressed warmly the hand that Betty gave each one in recognition of the common friend.

"I must let this handshake be a farewell for a few days, for I am going away," said Edyth, standing up. "I must hurry home and pack my trunk. May I come to see you as soon as I get back?"



"Do come. I want you to meet my friend, Miss Byrd, who is with me."

"Then we can make plans to call on Mrs. King," said Gertrude.

With many last whisperings the girls left the library, and Betty, her heart fluttering pleasantly, went back to her "Pumpkin Background."

Miss Hunt was still pasting labels and smiling over Betty's meeting the girls, for she entered into every one's pleasures with a lively interest, and the three attractive girls talking at once had warmed her heart. The room was again quiet, save for the ticking of the low French clock on the mantelpiece and the rustle of the leaves of Betty's magazine.

Betty turned when she heard a firm, steady tread on the granite steps leading up to the library. The door opened, and she saw a tall clerical-looking gentleman, who wiped his forehead, she decided, in a truly oratorical way. Yes, she thought, he preaches or lectures; his long cuffs alone would betray him.

The librarian, examining the books and sorting the labels, did not notice him, until a deep voice said:

"Miss Hunt, I believe."

"Oh!" trembled from the librarian's lips when



she looked up and met the stranger's eyes. Betty saw her hand shake as she put down a book and leaned back in her chair.

"You, John!" was all she said, but Betty turned her head away, so appealing were voice and look.

Betty could not leave the room without disturbing them. She was too far away to hear their conversation, but her imagination worked rapidly. He was an old lover, a missionary, and that accounted for Miss Hunt's avidity for missions. They had been parted by a lovers' quarrel and, at last, were reunited. Betty longed to bless them, to beg them to marry without delay for fear something might come between them again.

She had only a vague idea about "lovers' quarrels," but that represented them in quite another and far more enthralling aspect than ordinary quarrels. A "lovers' quarrel," a term full of the richest possibilities, of sad sweetness, heartbreak, faded flowers, all the delicate appurtenances of romance, — beloved romance of her Lochinvar, her St. Agnes' Eve!

How terrible it would be if one of those mysterious, yet pathetically beautiful, quarrels should take place and no one intervene! With misty



memories of bookish lovers' quarrels, like the one in "All She Hath," she felt they were usually intangible, light as air, yet heavy as rain with tears.

Once she heard the lover turn away abruptly. Betty grew cold. Had a new quarrel begun? The lover usually turned on his heel, while the heroine sank gracefully into her chair. Poor Miss Hunt had only a revolving chair, that had an underhand way of tilting back unexpectedly. Betty half arose and looked towards the water-cooler; but no, thank goodness, he had returned, and Miss Hunt looked quite rosy. Betty sat down and again gazed out of the window.

She kept her back towards them and looked out fixedly until she saw someone coming towards the library. She could not have them disturbed by people too dull and sordid to know that a true romance was being enacted under their very eyes; who would ask for a tame book of fiction and keep the lovers apart. Oh, it was that horrid Mrs. Smath, the village gossip, and she *had* a book under her arm.

Betty jumped up, coughing warningly, and with downcast eyes walked towards the old-new lovers.

Miss Hunt looked at her vaguely, and the



middle-aged lover stepped back and feigned an interest in the rows of juvenile books.

"I'll take your place, Miss Hunt, if you — if you want —" began Betty, impulsively, almost in a whisper; but she did not know how to go on. How could she say, "If you want to escape Mrs. Smath with your returned lover"?

Miss Hunt blushed, then smiled and nodded appreciatively, recovering any possible loss of poise before the noted gossip entered.

"I understand," she had time to whisper, and she opened her big book to note the return of the gossip's volume. Betty stood by, furtively taking in the stranger's appearance, and then as furtively stealing a glance at Miss Hunt's happy face.

Mrs. Smath left after a futile effort to draw Miss Hunt out about the man who stood looking at the long row of books for children as though fascinated.

The interruption gave Betty a good opportunity to go, but as she was hurrying to the door Miss Hunt motioned her to stay.

She was glad to find that it was nearly closing time. No lovers' quarrel yet! She sighed with relief when she saw Miss Hunt close her record book and put it away.



Taking hold of Betty's hand, Miss Hunt led her up to the middle-aged lover and introduced her to him.

"Miss Baird!" the clergyman repeated. "I came from the West to consult Dr. Baird about my work, and — and —" Smiling first down at the lady by his side, then across to the tall girl, he added, "I came to consult Miss Hunt about another matter, also very, very near my heart."

His smile was so genial and his glance so open and kind that Betty fell in love with the "middle-aged" lover herself, and felt very happy that her dear Miss Hunt had recovered him.

"Shall I keep the library for you to-night?" asked Betty.

Miss Hunt hesitated.

"If you will be so kind," answered the lover, laughing. "I am going to take matters into my own hands *this* time."

In a day or two Betty received this note from Miss Hunt:

MY DEAR MISS BAIRD, — I have spoken to several of the members of the Library Committee about your fitness for the position of librarian. They seemed pleased with the idea. I have not, however, seen Mr. Webbie, the president, who is now out of town. Of course they look upon you as a substitute, for the



present, but I hope to convince them that you are prepared in every way to hold this responsible place. It would be a great pleasure to me to think of you in the beautiful library I have grown to love, when I am in the far West, happier and happier as the days go by.

With best wishes for your success, I am,

Yours most sincerely,

HARRIET HUNT.



## XVII

### THE NEW LIBRARIAN AND HER PRESIDENT

BETTY sat behind the desk at the library, waiting for a trustees' meeting. She was in Miss Hunt's revolving chair. She told Lois that the fact that her chair revolved made all the difference in the world in her attitude. The revolutions emphasized the practical business side of the new venture; otherwise she might think she was holding an afternoon tea, with books in the place of the conventional teacups.

When she wheeled around in that chair she felt years older, and had an inrush of true business-like spirit. A revolving chair was incompatible with sentiment or romance or even Original Thoughts, and she sometimes wondered how Miss Hunt's romance had managed to come off so beautifully successful.

As the library was not opened until ten o'clock, Betty still marketed for her mother and took her father to the station. The enterprise did not interfere with any necessary home duty, and at the end of the year she expected to have three hun-



dred and sixty dollars to pay on the mortgage, — a mere sop, perhaps, for that terrible Cerberus, nevertheless something.

This first meeting with her trustees — for Betty always, with great glee, used the possessive pronoun — was a big event, and she looked forward to it with pride and a very natural self-distrust. The president of the Library Association was accounted the richest man in the community, and for that reason had been elected to the office. His name had been familiar to Betty, but she had not known him even by sight.

On this momentous evening Betty was very dainty in her white flannel suit, with a red rose in her hair. She had piled her hair on the top of her head with a view to looking mature. The one wish of her heart was to “look ten years older.” The coquettish rose, however, frustrated all her careful efforts to appear old enough and wise enough to be the custodian of the library.

The president, Mr. Webbie, came first.

Betty knew him by inspiration. He looked at her with the indulgent smile of one who had seen children masquerading before in their elders' clothes. His piercing black eyes, set close together, never smiled; he smiled only with the muscles of his cheeks. He was short and wiry



and clothed in handsome, well-padded homespun. Betty was at least two inches taller than he, and felt that she could not really be afraid of a man on whose bald spot she could look down.

"I was not here when the trustees elected a temporary librarian. Is she in the committee room?" he asked briskly, looking around for the temporary person, necessarily temporary since he had not been present when she was elected.

That "temporary" made Betty quite faint, and she sank back into her revolving chair. Perhaps for the first time in her short life she was incapable of uttering a word.

Mr. Webbie glanced at her sharply, then as if, as was his habit, denying the two-edgedness of his unloving eyes, he moved his facial muscles into a propitiating smile.

"Can you direct me to Miss Baird?"

And Betty, ashamed of her youth, ashamed of her lack of a business air, ashamed of every earthly advantage she possessed, — for Mr. Webbie had this not uncommon power of putting people to disadvantage, — stood up instinctively and answered:

"I am Miss Baird."

"You!"



That was all he said, and, though the smiling muscles worked mechanically, Betty could foresee this president rising from his chair in the committee meeting and saying:

“Her youth is against her. We must have a woman of experience at the head of our library of which I am the president.”

Meanwhile he was saying something to her that was evidently meant to be agreeable, but those other words were ringing in her ears, and she could only make out that he was glad to meet her and, above all, he was surprised at her youth, and that “youth was to be envied.”

Betty's trustees came in one by one, and, greeting her pleasantly, filed into the little committee room. She was not asked to attend the meeting. Perhaps they thought it was unwise to leave the reading-room unprotected; at least so she tried to comfort herself.

But with her remembrance of the “temporary librarian,” and that “You!” of surprise and disapproval, Betty saw her three hundred and sixty dollars divided by twelve, and she could be sure of only thirty.

She pressed her lips together and tried to smile as she thought: “Anyway, it will pay for father's overcoat.” And — for hope dies



lingeringly in the young — perhaps they would not be able to find a librarian for a month or two, and then she would have enough to pay the pawnbroker.

After a short conference the trustees came out; all were hovering around the president as if his laconic sentences held golden thoughts. They smiled good-night to Betty, but half-humorously; apparently they had gained a new point of view. They made her feel very young, sadly young.

Craig Ellsworth came with Lois to take Betty home. They found her with flushed cheeks and unnaturally bright eyes. She revolved and revolved in her chair until Lois cried out that she made her dizzy.

Without answering Lois, she stopped and began putting away the records and piling in a neater row the books that had been returned.

“Why don’t you say something?” Craig asked, standing in front of the desk that Betty was so proud of.

Betty looked up in surprise.

“Pardon me, Craig, I was thinking about something.”

“When Betty thinks, Craig,” said Lois, laughing teasingly, “she simply has to give



herself up to it. She has had such a little bit of experience."

"Yes, that's true," answered Betty, absently, going into another room for her hat and coat.

"What's up?" Craig asked in a whisper. "I never saw Betty this way before."

Lois shook her head, whispering back:

"I am afraid something is wrong about this position."

Betty came in fastening her hatpins in her hat, and Craig helped her on with her coat.

"Dear Betty, please tell us what has happened?" asked Lois, putting her arms around her.

"I can't talk."

"It will do you good to blow out," cried Craig, encouragingly.

"I think it is all up here," she said, with an effort.

"Oh, Betty, don't say that, don't!" cried Lois, dropping into a chair, and mechanically Betty followed her example.

"It's my age, my lack of age," said Betty, bitterly. "I can't see what difference it makes when I can do the work." Then she told them everything that had passed during the evening.

"Perhaps it's not so bad as you think," con-



soled Lois, but down in her heart she feared the worst.

Never had Betty looked so young, and the rose in her hair added to the effect of a brilliant, beautiful child, hardly one to whom a hard-headed business man would think of intrusting the buying of books and the handling of a fairly large sum of money, and from whom he could expect the judgment and tact needed in a place where everything fell on one pair of shoulders. That pretty, golden-haired head would not naturally impress a casual observer as an old one on young shoulders.

"Where did you get that rose?" asked Lois, apparently irrelevantly; but to her that rose had made a difference in Betty's fate.

"A little child gave it to me and to please her I stuck it into my hair," answered Betty, as though she barely heard. Wearily she got up and Craig silently helped her put the chairs in place and turn off the electric lights. Lois wandered restlessly to and fro.

The cart held three grave passengers. Merry-legs, in the moonlight, trotted jubilantly towards home, arching his pretty neck, and kicking his white feet, but all to no account. His friends were blind to his beauty and cleverness.



“There is no use in speaking to mother about it just now,” Betty said when they entered the house. Mrs. Baird met her daughter at the door, and kissed her tenderly, believing her silence to be due to weariness, and hurried her off to bed.



## XVIII

### “SHOCKINGLY YOUNG”

“**L**OIS, Lois, come in here!” Betty called across the narrow hall the next morning, after an almost sleepless night.

Lois hurried over, with one hand full of hair-pins and the other grasping a hair-brush.

“See how perfectly ashen I look,” said Betty, sitting down on the bed despairingly. “It will trouble father all day if he sees me this way. He worries more than he did in Weston. What shall I do?”

“Pinch your cheeks, Betty,” suggested Lois, turning her face to the light. “Yes, you are ghastly white. You dear thing, I wish you would n’t worry over losing that hateful library position.”

“It meant so much, Lois. It was such a good way to help father. He shows the strain of his work and the anxiety about our debts.”

“If you would only take some of our money!” cried Lois, for the hundredth time. The two



friends had grown so like sisters that they had no secrets from each other, though Betty's mother would have considered it the very worst taste to speak of private money matters to any one else.

"Of course we could n't possibly do it. The Bairds are too independent for that," answered Betty. "We always come out right in the end. Now I must try to get more color into my face," and she jumped off the bed and stood by the glass, rubbing her cheeks until they were crimson.

Edwynna, awakened by the conversation, which they had failed to keep to a whisper, sat up in bed and watched the girls for a time.

"What are you doing, Cousin Betty? What makes you pinch your cheeks?" she said, finally.

"Oh, to be more beautiful, of course," answered Betty, turning round and throwing Edwynna a kiss.

"That's good," cried Lois, clapping her hands. "Now you look like yourself, with that lovely color."

However, in a few minutes the unnatural flush died away, and Betty looked despondently at her reflection.



“It’s a regular Lancastrian and York battle,” said Lois, to whom the color deepening on Betty’s cheeks then disappearing suggested the idea of red and white roses.

Edwyna had remained silent, but her interest in the operation never flagged. She was gradually realizing that Betty wanted to look “red,” as she put it.

“Why don’t you put on a little rogue, Cousin Betty?” she asked. “Mrs. Siggins always put a little red rogue on her face when she went to a party.”

Betty and Lois looked at each other inquiringly. What *did* the child mean?

Edwyna plainly showed her disgust at their dullness.

“A little red rogue, a little red rogue,” she insisted impatiently.

Then it dawned on Betty, and in a moment she had her manicure ointment in her hand and was putting it on her cheeks.

“Rouge, Lois, rouge! Three cheers for Edwyna’s ‘little red rogue’! He’s the very chap I want.” She dabbed a big red splotch on either cheek, much to Edwyna’s delight.

“Betty, Betty!” cried Lois, throwing herself into a rocking-chair and laughing until she almost



cried. Edwyna joined in, feeling that somehow she was the cause of it.

"What *will* you do next?" cried Lois.

"I consider this a stroke of genius, Edwyna's and mine combined," answered Betty, deep in the new art of painting. "Father is so guileless he will never suspect, and mother is always so busy seeing him off that I can hide it from her. Oh, joy! Look!"

Betty turned a very pink cheek towards the light for inspection. Lois sprang to her side and examined it critically.

"You have put too much on. It's an inch thick. Let me rub it off." She snatched a towel.

"Oh, but I want to look perfectly blooming, Lois," protested Betty, backing away. "This high color is very becoming."

She began to perfect her art with a few more gentle touches. Just then a ray of sunshine, striking her face, made her drop her hand and give a little scream.

"How dreadful! It's streaked!"

"Lois told you so," piped Edwyna, who had a strong sense of justice and very little sympathy with temperamental or artistic peculiarities.

Lois and Betty laughed, Betty pretending to



do all sorts of things to avenge herself on Edwynna for taking Lois's part.

“Sit in the window here where the light is good,” commanded Lois, forcing her into a chair, “and I'll smooth it until it is in reality a Lancastrian rose.”

“Lois, you grow poetical,” chaffed Betty, holding herself as prim and straight as a wooden figure. Fountains of hope were bubbling up in her heart again. Maybe it was only her imagination that had made it all seem so ominous last night. Anyway, she would keep it from her parents as long as she could.

Lois finished her little pattings and soft manipulations, then stood off with her head to one side and inspected the cheeks.

“I believe it would deceive any one, early in the morning, before the sun is *very* high,” she announced. “Of course you'll put on a veil when you take your father to the station.”

“Yes. And I'll keep it down as much as I can. Poor old daddy!” sighed Betty, hope growing less effervescent when she thought of him. “Now to dress Edwynna. Here, let me button your dress. There! Now for the hair ribbon.”

Betty opened a box filled with different-colored ribbons and selected one of bright red.



"I have a passion for hair ribbons," said Edwyna with content, fingering the boxful.

In less than half an hour they were all in the dining-room.

"You are looking unusually well this morning, Elizabeth," said Dr. Baird, when he kissed her good-morning. "Your librarianship agrees with you. I am glad you are well situated. It is an education to live with books, to have their constant companionship."

Betty turned quickly from her unsuspecting father to the breakfast table and busied herself there a moment, then excused herself to go upstairs. She had only a minute to spare, but she threw herself on her knees at the side of the bed, and buried her face in her arms. It was an incoherent little prayer, but, quieted, Betty rose and hurried downstairs.

"Oh, Betty," whispered Lois, "you have rubbed the pink off your face, and some of it is on your shirtwaist sleeve!"

Betty gasped. Fortunately, there was only a slight stain on the white sleeve, but her face had returned to its former paleness. She pulled down her veil and, with a hasty kiss for her mother, went out of the door, laughing and waving her hand as if the lightest heart on Long Island beat



under the white shirtwaist with its telltale spot of pink.

“Betty is in high spirits this morning,” said Mrs. Baird to Lois, as they watched the cart drive off. “She is happy now that she has her work. It is congenial, and there is no doubt that it will help out wonderfully.” Mrs. Baird smiled contentedly.

Poor Lois mumbled a reply and, with some excuse about airing the rooms, sped away.

In the library Betty was going over the fall lists of books when she heard footsteps outside the door. They hesitated, and seemed reluctant to go any farther. Looking up from her heap of many-colored catalogues, she saw Mr. Cloud and two other trustees entering.

Mr. Cloud had always had a pleasant word for Betty, a kind “Well, how do you like it by this time?” and, in her loyal heart, she had refused to see anything humorous in the reiterated formula; though Lois said if *she* had the place she would throw it up to escape that inevitable question and the stereotyped smile of benevolence accompanying it.

This morning, as Mr. Cloud approached the desk, the first of the familiar words escaped, — “Well, how do you like —” but he smothered



them half way out and grew very red in the face. Then, mumbling a faint good-morning, he wandered aimlessly about the room, examining books of travel, biography, juveniles, all the while shunning Betty, though he glanced at her out of the corners of his small blue eyes when she was apparently absorbed in her work. Several times he coughed. The other trustees, after speaking diffidently to Betty, stood at a window, talking in an undertone.

"Are you taking anything for your cough, Mr. Cloud?" asked Betty, with solicitude, as he hacked ostentatiously.

She had often heard Miss Hunt open a conversation with embarrassed people that way and had seen brilliant results. Betty longed to talk with Mr. Cloud and gain his influence to help her keep her position.

"Only S.B.'s. I find them excellent for any tickling of the throat," he answered solemnly, walking over to the desk and sitting down opposite Betty, and motioning the other trustees to take chairs near him.

"It is best not to let a cold run on," said Betty, sagely, and feeling much like Miss Hunt as she placed chairs for the men, who sat on the edge as if they were ready to fly at a moment's notice.



“Yes, this time of the year they are apt to hang on all winter,” Mr. Cloud replied, still mournfully.

His mind was evidently on another subject, and even the joys of a talk devoted exclusively to his own ailments could not cheer him nor divert him from what weighed on his mind. He coughed once again, then, rubbing his hands in a sort of apologetic fashion, he said:

“The trustees had a meeting last night.” Cough, cough.

The other two men stirred in their chairs and the younger one cleared his throat.

“Yes, I remember seeing you there. Also the president, Mr. Webbie, for the first time.”

Cough, much coughing.

“Yes, I was there,” he admitted, taking out an S.B. coughdrop.

“Mr. Webbie is looking well after his European trip,” said one of the other trustees. Mr. Cloud and his companion looked at him but received his remark in silence.

“Mr. Webbie was surprised to find that I was so young, was n’t he?” Betty asked, determined to end the suspense, for by this time she was compelled to believe that Mr. Cloud’s embarrassment came from the fear of telling her the un-



pleasant news that they were soon to dispense with her services.

"Yes, he was," said Mr. Cloud, brightening at the opening, while the other trustees leaned back in their chairs as if their minds were suddenly opened to the reason why chairs had backs. "In fact, Mr. Webbie was not only surprised, but, Miss Baird, he was shocked, yes, positively shocked, to find you so young."

"Now, really, Mr. Cloud, I never heard before that it was 'shocking' to be young," answered Betty, with spirit. "It's inconvenient at times, but certainly not shocking. Besides, this is the day of young people in all the affairs of life."

Betty felt that she was making a creditable defence, but Mr. Cloud's mind was dwelling on Mr. Webbie, and he was deaf to her words.

"The town owes a great deal to Mr. Webbie, a great deal. Yes, I regret to say, he was shocked, I might say painfully shocked."

"Had he recovered before you left him?" asked Betty, pertly, for she felt perfectly safe in her irony with these obtuse men.

"He kept repeating all the way to the car, — for he went home in the car; he does n't take his fine horses out at night often, — he kept repeating down to the corner of High Street, I should



say, for I didn't go as far as the car, he kept repeating how shocked he was to find you so young, so very young. I am sure he must have kept repeating it all the way home, though, as I said, I only went as far as the High Street corner, — the corner, you know, that meets Main Street.”

“After you left Mr. Webbie he walked up to Prospect Street and took the car there,” interposed one of the other trustees.

Mr. Cloud was showing his surprise and interest in the strange phenomenon, but before he had time to put it into words Betty said gravely:

“It's a pity you didn't go all the way home with him. Perhaps you might have helped him in his sad mental plight.”

“Yes, he was shocked. He acknowledged that as a substitute your being so young did not make any particular difference. He is our richest man. The village couldn't do without him.”

“Well, what has he done for the village?” asked Betty.

“He has the largest house here, the very largest,” answered Mr. Cloud, with the greatest respect.

“Does he buy largely from your merchants?”

“No, oh, no! He has everything sent from the



city. He can afford to. Even his coal is from his own mines."

"Does he contribute to public improvements?" pursued Betty, with a rather sarcastic smile.

"Well, you know, there is not much that can be done in a place of this size. His property is outside the village limits, so his taxes are low. He's a shrewd business man, very shrewd."

"Then I can't see what the village has to be thankful for, so far as he is concerned," said Betty, emphatically.

"Why, he's an honor to the village. Even in New York his name is well known. It's good for a place to have such men."

Suddenly he collapsed and took another cough-drop.

Betty watched him, waiting for the blow she knew was in store for her, but she saw that she would be compelled to prod him to get at the bottom of what took place at the meeting. The other two trustees were equally unpromising material.

"Well, what did Mr. Webbie tell you to do about me?" she asked.

"Now, that is just what we came in to see you about," he said, swallowing the coughdrop whole.



“Yes, that is what we came in to see you about,” echoed the others.

“I was delegated to tell you that in a month or two your services would not be needed.”

“Why do you wait a month or two?” asked Betty, her heart galloping.

“Now, that is the remarkable part. Mr. Webbie has a cousin who is fitted in every way to fill this position. But she won’t be able to take the place until — ”

“Ah, I see. A relative! Did he give you her age? I think you ought to have a certificate that she is not under fifty.”

“We can trust Mr. Webbie. He has a long head. He made his own fortune.”

The two trustees nodded in admiring concurrence.

“Yes? But I don’t think he will make any one else’s fortune,” said Betty. She was wearied with hearing of Mr. Webbie, and turned abruptly away. She saw no reason why she should listen to the eulogies of a man who, worth millions, should, out of self-interest, take her little mite and give it to a relative.

Mr. Cloud and the other two trustees stood up awkwardly and, saying good-by, made a hasty, and no doubt relieved, exit.



Betty sat long, gazing at the blue publisher's list on the desk. Her eyes ceased to see the pleasant legends, and hot tears washed away from her cheeks every trace of the "little red rogue."



## XIX

### IN THE TEA-ROOM

**A**N hour after the trustees' committee had discharged its duty Edyth Banks swept breezily into the library. She had been calling on Mrs. Webbie, who told her the news about Betty, and it had sent her flying down.

Hardly a day had passed since their first meeting that had not seen Edyth in the library, for she and Betty had become warm friends. Indeed, Betty, Lois, Edyth, and Gertrude were constantly together when Betty had a free hour; and when she was engaged they dropped in to see her, though so completely was Betty wrapped up in her new work that they complained that she was barely civil to them. Betty sternly quoted "duty before pleasure," and went on cataloguing the books, though it was very evident, as they retorted, that she found her "pleasure" in her "duty."

She had been studying the different methods of classification and record, and hoped to introduce a more modern and expeditious plan than



was at present in operation. Of this she said nothing, as it would seem to reflect on Miss Hunt; but her eager and conscientious mind could not stand still in any enterprise where there was an ideal to be reached.

To-day Mrs. Webbie's words were ringing in Edyth's ears.

"No, I have not met Miss Baird," she had said. "Of course, with our many social duties, I could not call. The Bairds are new people. I never call on new people. I have heard, though, that she is very nice. It's unfortunate that she's so young. Fancy a girl of seventeen holding such a position! Mr. Webbie, I assure you, was very much provoked last night when he learned how young she was. I don't know what would become of that library if Mr. Webbie was not interested in it."

"Oh, very likely Miss Baird's friend, Mrs. King, would see that the place was kept going. She is perfectly devoted to Miss Baird," Edyth assured her.

"Mrs. King! You surprise me! Are Mrs. King and Miss Baird friends?"

"Very intimate friends."

"I am sure Mr. Webbie did not know that. He admires Mr. King extremely. They have met



on the golf links frequently. I have never met Mrs. King. I thought of calling, but they say she does not care to meet the people here."

"The Kings are 'new people,'" suggested Edyth, maliciously.

She saw that Mrs. Webbie was chagrined that they had made a social blunder at a time when they were laboring to entrench themselves in society, — a society of which Mary Livingstone-King was easily the leader. Edyth wished some one was there to appreciate the neatness, the completeness, with which she was avenging Betty.

"Yes, Miss Baird is their most intimate friend, and of Mr. King's sister, too. They went to school together," she emphasized.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mrs. Webbie, growing red, and her Scotch-Irish brogue betraying itself.

"Yes. And Mrs. Brooks thinks she is the loveliest girl she knows," pursued Edyth, relentlessly, enjoying Mrs. Webbie's discomfiture.

"Mrs. Jackson Brooks?" The words actually sputtered from her wide mouth.

"Yes, Mrs. Jackson Brooks," repeated Edyth, crushingly. "And Dr. Mason, who is, perhaps, our most learned man, says Miss Baird is the best librarian we have ever had."



In this manner the conversation had gone on, Edyth working unsparingly on Mrs. Webbie's sensitive point, social success.

"They deserve it, the snobs, for treating Betty that way in order to get in a poor relative," she said to herself, and then left the unhappy woman to hurry to Betty and learn if she knew her fate, and to comfort her. As soon as she saw Betty she thought, "She knows it." With a great bustle and air of stirring things up, she said:

"It is time for luncheon, Mistress Betty Baird."

"Is it?" said Betty, listlessly, looking at the clock. "I don't feel like eating. I have lost my appetite. I suppose I have had too much mental pabulum!"

She smiled, but under it Edyth detected a weariness quite foreign to Betty's usually spontaneous gayety.

"Mrs. Brooks is to be at the tea-room at one o'clock and she wishes to see you. Jack's chum, Dunny, is here. They want us to go out Friday night to see Mrs. King, and we are to make plans in the tea-room."

"How kind! Friday night? I can go, for that is one of the evenings the library is closed. I'll put on my hat and run down with you."

Over her white flannel dress she threw a long



blue coat, punched the hatpins through the white felt college hat, and then, locking the door, put the key into her pocket. She took a deep breath as she stepped out into the delightful autumn air.

A bright coal fire burned in the grate of the tea-room. Betty, who had been shaking with nervous chills since the trustees left her, was glad to see the cheerful light, and dragged up a low chair, and throwing off her coat, sat toasting her feet until the door flew open and Jack Brooks, with a pompous show of gallantry, bowed his mother in.

“Enter, Madame,” he said, waving his hand, then slamming the door in the face of his chum, who was close behind.

“Oh, Jack!” remonstrated his horrified mother.

“I have faith in little Dunny’s ability to open a door. You see it was not misplaced,” he added, as Dunny Lane came grinning in.

Lane was a tall, ruggedly built boy of nineteen or twenty, with a kind, open face and thick hair that looked as if a bottle of peroxide of hydrogen had been carelessly spilt over it. He was followed by Jack’s dog, — a poor mongrel thing that he had picked up somewhere, and which followed him about with permanently beseeching eyes.



Dunny took the little creature up under his arm and bowed to the girls when Mrs. Brooks gave their names, blushing to a rich mahogany color through the tan. His eyes were merry, and every one liked him, even if he could only say in his deep voice, "Awfully glad to know you," and give an aching handshake, then remain silent during the remainder of the conversation. One felt his good will and health when his strong white teeth gleamed from his big open mouth as he laughed heartily at every one's cleverness; and even attempts at cleverness did not weary Dunny.

"Find a chair for Mr. Lane," said Mrs. Brooks, reproachfully.

"Mother, mother, you nag so!" laughed Jack. "You expect us to be as polite as French dancing-masters."

Dunny smiled embarrassedly on finding himself the topic of conversation before two strange young ladies and Mrs. Brooks.

"Dunny will take to the tall timbers in a minute," said Jack, easily. Mrs. Brooks made Dunny sit by her on the sofa, endeavoring to atone for her happy-go-lucky son's manners.

Betty had remained standing until Mrs. Brooks sat down, then she turned again to the fire, un-





““WON’T YOU ACCEPT HIS TEA, MISS BAIRD?” JACK  
SAID IMPLORINGLY” — *Page 231*







heeding the pleasantries that were passing from one to another. Her mind slipped back to the bitter disappointment of the morning, and while Jack and Edyth were talking, and Mrs. Brooks was trying to make Dunny forget his embarrassment, she went over the painful scene of the morning again and again.

Jack sauntered over to Betty, keeping up a running fire of conversation with Edyth, and an occasional joke with Dunny.

"A penny for your thoughts, Miss Baird," he said, tossing a bright penny down on the table by her side, and sinking lazily into a chair.

Betty looked up with a start.

"They are not worth a bright new penny; they are dull and tiresome."

"I'll run the risk gladly," he said, laughing, leaning towards the fire and warming his hands, while he gave her a penetrating glance.

Betty shook her head.

"I always play fair."

"Here is your tea, chappie," interrupted Dunny, thrusting a cup at Jack, and inclining his head towards Betty's back to indicate that it was for her.

Betty turned round.

"Won't you accept his tea, Miss Baird?" Jack



said imploringly, with hands clasped in supplication; then, turning to Dunny:

"Look here, old fellow, you must not gorge on this tea. You are in training, you know."

Dunny grinned.

"That's all right if it's weak," he replied. "We are allowed to drink weak tea."

"Say, Dunny, did you ever buck up against anything like this tea for strength?" asked Jack, banteringly, taking a sip and hurriedly putting down the cup in disgust.

Dunny grinned.

"Yes, Tom Santee."

Jack roared.

"By Jove, that's one for you, Dunny. Tom is the Yale halfback," he explained to Betty, still chuckling over Dunny's joke.

The door opened and Gertrude rustled in.

"So glad to see you, Mrs. Brooks. Delighted to see you out after your attack of grip. Why, here is Mr. Lane! When did you come to our village?"

Without waiting for replies, Gertrude rattled on in her high key, tossing off her fluffy neck-scarf, and posing gracefully by the mantel.

"Why, Betty, what makes you so quiet? I almost overlooked you," she said, then flew over



to Mrs. Brooks and began a steady flow of talk before Betty could answer.

Dunny wandered over to Edyth, and Jack leaned closer to Betty.

"What's up, Betty? Won't you tell a fellow?" he asked.

"I'll whisper it, for I don't want every one to know just yet."

Betty drew closer until their heads almost touched.

"I'm going to lose my job," she said, and tried to laugh it off.

Jack put out a protecting hand.

"I'll tell mother, and she will see that you get it back. She can manage old Webbie."

"No, don't you do that," answered Betty, emphatically. "It is settled, and I would not stay if they are not satisfied. There must be something else for me. I am going to find it, too." Betty lifted her head with that characteristic movement that all her friends had learned meant No Failure.

"It's tough luck anyhow, after the way you have tried everything," consoled Jack, for Betty had confided in him.

It would have been difficult for Betty to tell which boy had been of the greater help to her,



Jack or Craig Ellsworth. Jack was two years older than Craig, but the latter had a sternness and dignity that fun-loving, easy-going Jack lacked, and Betty felt that he could understand the situation better than rich Jack Brooks, for Craig, too, had to make a place for himself.

"Those trustees are a bunch of fools," said Jack, relieving his feelings in vituperation.

"Impeccable Webbie!" joined in Betty. "Do you know, Jack, Mr. Webbie is one of those horrid people who see at once the very thing you are trying to hide? If you have on an old pair of shoes, you can curl up your feet all you please, but he sees them. If you have a rip in your gloves you can feel his gimlet eyes going right through it, even if you do clench your hands until they ache. You just can't escape him. The moment his eyes rested on me he saw my seventeen years, two months and fourteen days."

"You don't look so terribly young to me," said Jack, eyeing Betty critically.

Betty smiled a little.

"We are contemporaries, Jack. You, naturally, can't see all the damaging evidences of my youth."

Betty stood up.



"I must go back to the library now," she said. "I have some work to finish before opening it."

Jack helped her on with her coat, then Betty went over to Mrs. Brooks.

"Must you go, Betty?" asked Mrs. Brooks, holding her hand and drawing her down for a kiss. "I hoped you could go with us for a drive."

"Mother means, in plain English, a cruise in her automobile," laughed Jack. "I believe mother thinks it is not dignified to drive in anything but a victoria, from the apologetic way she speaks of the car."

"It does make so much noise and dust and smell," Mrs. Brooks answered seriously, showing that her old-fashioned ideas of a lady's vehicle were not satisfied by an automobile.

"I should love to go with you, Mrs. Brooks, but, as I tell the girls, 'duty before —'"

"Don't, don't! Oh, spare us!" cried Edyth and Gertrude, simultaneously warding off Betty's proverb with distended palms.

Betty laughed, and writing the proverb in the air to the two girls, who had clapped their hands over their ears, she fled out of the door.



## XX

### PHOSPHORESCENCE

“**I** *HAD* to get a breath of fresh air, Lois,” said Betty, pacing rapidly up and down the veranda and pressing her hand to her forehead.

“Tell me all that happened, Betty,” urged Lois, taking one cold little hand in hers.

“Let us go over there to the bridge. Somehow the sight of water rushing through the flood-gate always calms me,” replied Betty, starting down the steps.

Lois threw one arm caressingly over her shoulder, and together the two friends walked thoughtfully to the old wooden bridge and leaned over the rail, on which was deeply engraved the names of the lads of the neighborhood. Beneath them they could see the water from the pond, flowing through the vents in the flood-gate in its effort to catch the retreating tide with a steady pouring sound that was inexpressibly soothing.



“The phosphorescence looks like stars tumbling down to the water,” said Betty, pointing to the illumination.

“I never saw this so brilliant before,” said Lois. “It is, as you say, like stars come very near.”

“Such things ought to help us,” said Betty, meditatively. “Look at the sky, so perfectly clear, and the stars laughing at us. And, oh! there is the moon peeping over the hill. It is actually coquetting with us. When you are off alone this way does n’t everything seem like a friend or a relative? I love that moon. If it were running instead of sailing I’d feel that it was a playmate, like Edwynna.”

“There is something young, almost frivolous, in a crescent moon,” said Lois. “Yet how positively hoary it is!”

“I fear we won’t keep our good looks quite so long,” laughed Betty, turning her face up into the stream of silvery light; and Lois knew that the night had once more played its human rôle in calming and soothing her discouraged friend.

While they walked back and forth on the bridge, Betty told Lois all the details of the day, and in the end Betty knew that now she could tell her mother without fear of breaking down.



She had herself well in hand when she and Lois came into the hall, where Mrs. Baird sat by a table reading aloud to Edwyna from "Alice in Wonderland."

"I can't see after being out in the dark," cried Betty, first shutting her eyes, then shielding them from the light with her hand. "Oh, mother, you should see the phosphorescence to-night. It's a miracle!"

Mrs. Baird looked up at the two girls' bright, pretty faces with keen satisfaction to see them so natural and unaffected, so happy in little things that she knew from experience could give much contentment, and in youth are often overlooked or passed by as uninteresting.

"Carissima, you smile as if at two innocent chickens," laughed Betty, who had learned to read her mother's face.

"You know, Betty, I am always happy when my two daughters are."

"Well, we will let it go at that," said Betty, teasingly, "though I suspect it is because we are so uncommonly beautiful, wise, and good. You won't acknowledge it for fear of spoiling our sweet unconsciousness."

"That speech does n't show any great unconsciousness," smiled her mother.



"Mrs. Siggins says that self-recommendation is no praise," quoted Edwyna, with grave inaccuracy.

Betty gave a little shriek, and Lois dragged her down on the long sofa and buried her head on her shoulder, laughing delightedly when Betty, in pantomime, wrote down a "Siggins Nugget."

Edwyna's dramatic instinct was satisfied with the commotion her remark had made and she went off to bed without a protest.

"How unconscious are you, anyway, Bet?" asked Lois, merely for something to say and to put off the telling of the news.

"Oh, I am so unconscious that I am perfectly witless," answered Betty, yawning ostentatiously. Then, suddenly sitting upright, she opened out her palms in a gesture of mock despair.

"Mother," she said, "I'm not to be the 'Queen of the May' any longer."

"What does the child mean?" asked her mother, in surprise, and turning to Lois with an inquiring glance.

Laughing, Betty clapped her hand over Lois's mouth.

"I won't have my news spoiled by any plain, sordid facts. It simply means, Carissima, that



I am either behind the times or very far in advance of them. Now, which is it, when you are too 'shockingly young' for a position?"

"They think you are too young for the library?" asked Mrs. Baird, quickly, and from the look on her face Lois saw that she had counted far more on the help it would be than they had suspected. But she gained control of her expression before Betty, who had been affecting to hunt something behind the pillows, turned round.

"Yes, Carissima, but don't worry. No doubt it would have been the means of burying all the talents that I 'unconsciously' believe I possess. I look upon it all as the Cloud with the silver lining. Rather pretty, that, Silver-lining library; alliteration and all."

"I am glad, sweetheart, that you have so much philosophy. It might have become mere routine and crushed all your originality. I am glad, if you are, to have you at home to wait until something with more of an outlook arises."

Mrs. Baird went over to Betty and, sitting down by her, took both hands in hers.

"How cold they are!" she exclaimed anxiously, looking into the dark eyes that always told Betty's own self better than words, especially



when it came to sparing any one's feelings. "It must not hurt, Betty," she added firmly. "That alone has the power to hurt us. The ninety dollars you will have earned is splendid for a girl of your age, and will more than pay your friend — or is it 'uncle'? — Goldstein. I am glad, too, that you won't have to go out in all kinds of weather."

"You know, mother, I am especially fond of what you call 'all kinds of weather,' — rain, snow, and sleet," said Betty, who felt that she could not accept any comfort then that was not of the highest brand, such as self-sacrifice or a bright to-morrow.

"How I hate that Mr. Webbie!" burst out Lois.

"I hate them all, every trustee of them!" amplified Betty. "I wish now that I had told Mr. Cloud what I thought of him and the others."

"That would have been beneath your dignity, Betty."

"Oh, it's a positive agony sometimes not to be able to say to people all the things it would be 'beneath one's dignity' to say," declared Betty, vigorously.

Every one laughed at Betty's despairing face.



"Will you tell father?" she asked, in milder tones.

"Your father has a good deal of sinful pride about his daughter's working, and I believe he will be thankful that the silver lining has shown itself. Unless, of course, he sees that you are hurt."

"You may be sure, Carissima, I won't add to father's troubles."

"I know I can trust your warm heart, though you are impulsive."

"'Impulsive'! In my case, another word for spasmodic ugliness and equally spasmodic nobility," said Betty, ruefully.



## XXI

### MARY LIVINGSTONE-KING'S PLAN

**T**HE Brooks touring car was slowly mounting the long, curving driveway that led up to Mary King's home. Jack was driving the car and Betty sat in front with him. Behind were Mrs. Brooks, Lois, Edyth, Gertrude, and Dunny.

"Oh!" exclaimed Betty and Lois, simultaneously. In the moonlight the wonderful picturesqueness of the great estate was revealed at every turn. Here and there, through the stately pines, oaks, and elms, gleamed pergolas of marble; bay trees, in immense carved hemispheres, stood remote and classic in the shadows of the silent terraces. The air was balmy; from the distance came the pensive sound of falling water.

A footman, liveried in green and gold, opened the door, while another servant deftly helped him to remove their wraps. In an instant the butler approached for their cards and ushered them into the library.



Mary appeared immediately and seized Betty with her left hand, while she extended to Mrs. Brooks a more sedate right one.

"This is perfectly delightful, Mrs. Brooks. And Betty and Lois in my own home! Little did we dream of it at The Pines!"

"It's bully!" said Mr. King, welcoming Mrs. Brooks, then stepping aside to speak to Betty.

"How does our shanty please you?" he asked. "But, of course, you haven't seen much of it yet," he added, with his jovial laugh. "Mary has been talking at a great rate about your artistic taste since she saw your place, you know."

"Why, this reminds me of the poems I have read of beautiful castles." Betty stopped, for her eyes were taking in every charming feature of a modern house designed by a firm of architects of international reputation. It was not as large as The Pines, she thought, but in a certain delightful home feeling it came close to her ideal.

Mrs. King at once arranged a game of bridge, and, as Betty did not play, she sat down on a window-seat, one overlooking the cedars on the side of the hill below. When the game was thoroughly started Mary came to take Betty through the house.



"I want you to see everything first with me alone. We always wanted to be alone when we read our Ballads at The Pines."

"You have a ballad right here, Mary," answered Betty, pointing down at the cedars, hushed and waiting in the moonlight. "Can't you see Burd Helen, with her lily-white hand and golden hair, riding her palfrey down there?"

"I can," said Mary, falling into the spirit. "Off there on the Sound I see Fair Jeannette sailing the dangerous waters for her own true love."

"What are you two mooning about?" asked Jack, who had sauntered up unnoticed.

"Jack, what brings you here? And here comes Dunny. Go back, both of you!" Mary commanded. "You are to play cards while Betty and I have a good long talk."

"I say, that's rough. Betty must play, too."

"Betty's father does n't like to have her play cards," said Mary.

"I'll stay here, then," said Jack, flinging himself down next to Mary.

"Oh, Jack, do go away. You are so blatantly modern. Go to your bridge."

With exaggerated limpness Jack left them, followed by Dunny.



Mary drew Betty's hand in her arm, and together they went into the drawing-room.

"Oh, this is beautiful!" cried Betty, enthusiastically.

"Yes, but there are some jarring notes and I want you to tell me what they are."

"Your house, Mary, is very — well, intellectual looking."

"You know how to reach one's tender spot," said Mary, laughing.

"You are right there, Mary," called Jack, who had overheard her, leaning forward to see better into the drawing-room.

"Here, old man, tend to your cards," cried Mr. King, jerking him back to the table.

Mary and Betty walked out of hearing.

"There is something wrong with this room," said Mary, looking around. "I have gone over all the things one by one; and individually, at least, they are good, but they are not restful. Do tell me what is wrong."

Betty hesitated. Would n't it be rude to criticize Mary's beautiful home?

"I can tell by your face, Betty, that you have laid your finger on the weak points. Please tell me what they are. Remember, it will be a favor to tell me."



The sincere ring in Mary's voice encouraged Betty to speak.

"You must not take me too seriously, Mary, but I think you have entirely too many pictures. They take from the grandeur of the views from these windows. Evidently the architects meant to have the decoration of the room subordinate to the magnificent picture outside."

Mary looked from the windows to the picture-laden walls.

"You are right, Betty," exclaimed Mary, beginning at once to take down a small picture from between two of the windows.

"Your wall is beautiful enough to afford a few uncovered spaces. Still, don't you think those beautiful brass sconces would look well there between the windows? They are not pictures attempting to rival the beauties outside. Then, Mary —" Betty grew embarrassed.

"Do tell me everything," Mary urged. "You have opened my eyes and I shall have this room changed to-morrow."

"Well, then, you have very little contrast. Your things are all figured, — your rugs, your furniture coverings, your portieres, your walls."

"That's the trouble. I am *so* relieved. Thank you, Betty, thank you. Oh, you are actually



crimson in your hatred of saying anything uncomplimentary."

"Your house is simply splendid and it seemed impertinent to say it," answered Betty, sighing with relief that the disagreeable ordeal was over.

"You are not through yet," laughed Mary. "There is the library."

Betty hung back.

"Let me enjoy these lovely things, Mary."

"No, I must have your opinion on the library."

"Some other day," pleaded Betty; but the one laughing, the other expostulating, they went into the library.

"Now, this is perfect!" cried Betty.

"No, it is n't. You can't escape that way. It is depressing."

"All you need is a decided touch of yellow in a piece of tapestry and a vase of chrysanthemums."

"Good! I am sure you have hit it. Now, you must see the remainder of the house and tell me what you think about the other rooms."

When they came downstairs and resumed their seats in the window, Betty's eyes were glowing with the joy of having seen so many delightful rooms, and the intellectual satisfaction of analyzing them with a friend who was in perfect sympathy.



“Betty, —” Mary stopped, clasped Betty’s hands, and looked down, as if she found it hard to go on. Her mind was now on something besides the house.

“Brace up, Mary,” laughed Betty, giving her a little shake.

“Well,” said Mary, hesitatingly, “Mrs. Brooks told me about the library.”

“Mean lady! I wanted to tell you that myself. It has become one of my pet stories. Jack is keeping count of the number of times I tell it. He says he is now at ten. I must tell you the way the impeccable Mr. Webbie was shocked at my innocent youth, and the way his followers, led by Mr. Cloud, — my cloud with the silver lining, — crawled into the library the next morning. I was wild to tell you, but you were out of town. It was too funny — afterwards.”

Betty sighed, remembering how little she had found it mirthful at the time.

Mary still held her hand in a warm, loving grasp.

“Good for you, Bet! You always were full of pluck. Tell me the details.”

Betty made a good story out of her adventure, trying hard to forget her pain and disappoint-



ment, but she succeeded only partially in concealing them from Mary's affectionate looks.

When she had finished Mary sat silent, pondering, while Betty, quivering with the memories of the past few days, tried to banish them by examining the pictures. Mary looked up, her eyes full of a problem, and almost mechanically her glance followed Betty's from object to object, then came back to Betty's face, and noted there her interest in the arrangement of a certain corner they had discussed. Suddenly a light dawned in her eyes.

"It's the very thing!" she said aloud. "The very thing," Mary repeated. "You are the very one for it. And it will suit you to perfection. I know it will."

"I am sure it will. I am the very one for it!" repeated Betty, gayly. "What is it that will suit me with such exquisite perfection? I hope you are not forgetting that I have been a *misfit* for some time. Have you another librarian's position for me, librarian of some very, *very* young girls, younger even than my dreadful youth, if that is possible?"

"No, indeed, Betty Baird," said Mary, emphatically. "No more librarians' positions for you, but a place where your original genius will



have a chance, unhampered even by your 'dreadful youth,' as you call it. We have a friend, an old friend of the family's, who has taken up household decoration as a profession. She has a large fortune, but at forty she found herself tired of frivolity, and she determined to have an interest in life, as her brothers had, and now she has a clientele that any one might be proud of. She is extremely attractive. Indeed, she is wonderful.

"Now, Betty, here is my plan. She has beautiful rooms on Fifth Avenue, and she told me recently that she wished she had a sister, or some one who was congenial and would see things from the same point of view. She feels all these ideas keenly, and she is temperamentally unfit to enjoy them alone. She wants an associate to share her joy in her work. She has those about her who only want to earn money and who have no enthusiasm. Betty, you are the very one to be with Miss Minturne!"

"Mary!"

Betty's brilliant eyes showed the fascination the subject held for her while Mary talked. She could not say another word.

"You are made for it," said Mary, emphatically, "and it will be just the thing for you until



you marry and are happy, like myself," she continued, looking over at her husband. "Yes, Betty, you must marry, but not for years."

Betty laughed. "I can't tell you how funny that sounds from you."

"Alexander says I am growing to be a regular match-maker!"

"You! That is very oldish!" laughed Betty.

"I *am* oldish, and, what's more, I *like* being oldish," Mary asserted.

"And I like it in *you*, but then, I like everything about you. One can never outgrow one's first ideal."

"I never could see why you put me on such a pedestal. That makes one oldish."

"There! You won't forgive me, I see," cried Betty. "You sarcastic girl — or old married woman!"

Mary laughed, and pulled Betty, who was now standing, down on the seat beside her.

"You are a nice one, Betty, saying all sorts of things and calmly ignoring my wrath!"

The girls laughed over the nonsense, in sheer lightheartedness.

"Why are n't you more enthusiastic about my plan?" demanded Mary, suddenly aware that Betty was surprisingly cool about it.



“Enthusiastic, Mary? Listen to the sad story of my life. I was enthusiastic over pickles, — beautiful pickles, too, fifty bottles of them. Where, oh, where, are yesterday's pickles?

“Then I bubbled over on preserves. Twenty-five jars, also Betty's Best Brand. Where are my preserves? My garden was my next enthusiasm. Where are now my purple melons and late winter tomatoes? Then came l-i-t-e-r-a-t-u-r-e. Where is my lit-er-a-ture? Softly, — in the waste-paper basket. Alone of all my enthusiasms I know where literature lieth. Yet is not my sad tale ended. Where is the best librarian in America? By your side, libraryless! Dost weep?”

With an extravagant gesture of despair, Betty sank down at Mary's side.

“Oh, Betty, the same Betty Baird!” Mary cried, drawing her towards her and throwing her arms around her. “You make everything so humorous! I know it's only your pluck. Edyth told me, too, about those disgusting Webbies. We are going to cut them. They deserve it for their contemptible actions. His cousin has plenty of money and does n't need —”

“What are you two gossiping about?” called over Jack, interrupting her.



"Your very dear friend, Betty's 'impeccable Webbie,'" replied Mary.

Jack made a significant gesture, as of punching a head.

Mr. King nodded approvingly and said:

"I can get even with old Webbie," and everybody applauded.

"You see what good friends you have," said Mary.

"Yes, and it makes everything easier," Betty replied, gratefully.

"You will consider my plan, won't you?" Mary asked.

"Consider it! Why, Mary, I am *wild* about it. I won't be able to think of another thing until I hear from you."

"Good!" cried Mary, as Betty sprang up, and, walking up and down, the two went into details, occasionally stopping to look over the shoulders of the card-players.

"Is n't Mrs. Brooks lovely!" said Betty, glancing over at the table, her eyes resting admiringly on the stately, graying head. "She has such an elegantly detached air, yet she is playing conscientiously so that she won't spoil the game."

"That Dunny is a character. I have known him for years," said Mary.



"He does n't seem very intellectual, but that shrewd upper lip means something. Is he sarcastic?"

"Not a bit. He is only a wholesome boy without the gift of expression. Boys are necessarily limited. He and Jack are loyal friends. Jack has, one of his professors told me this summer, fine natural gifts, but he will not apply himself. He is home every Saturday and Sunday, and thinks more of his car than of his college. I think you are spurring him. He says there never was a girl like you."

"I like him — who could help it? — for he is winning, in that frank way, without any kind of pretence, but I do think it is a terrible pity that he has no ambition. Is it because he has so much money?"

"The game is up!" interrupted the subject of their discussion, coming up with Lois. "Look here, Dunny, you toddle off," he commanded, as his friend diffidently approached with his hands in his pockets.

"The game is over," Dunny defended himself.

"What of it? There are two girls there. You leave them to a married man, the husband of this amiable lady here, and come poaching on my preserves!"



They all turned and looked at the other party.

"Three ladies there, three here. You see where your place is," Jack summed up, and without ceremony he wheeled Dunny around facing the table and commanded:

"Forward, march!"

Dunny smiled good-naturedly, but turned and walked over to Lois.

"Alec is happy. He's on his hobby-horse, showing off those old English prints of his," he said.

"That Edyth is a peach. Why don't you go over and snuggle up to her?" insisted Jack.

"Satisfied where I am," Dunny announced. He and Lois quickly found a topic of conversation, for Lois had the sweetest courtesy and was so much interested in others that she instinctively found the subject most congenial and most likely to put shy people at their ease. Jack looked his amazement as he heard the continuous sound of Dunny's deep voice.

"Listen to him prattling. I didn't know it was in him," he said to Betty.

"I must go now and speak to my other guests," said Mary. "Betty, you have a way of making one forget there are other charming people around."



Betty explained Mary's plan for her to Jack.

"Miss Minturne! You *would* be in luck. She is the most fascinating woman in New York. Mother will be mightily pleased, for they are old friends. They went to Madame Bontemps' school together, then finished off together in France."

All were surprised when Mrs. Brooks intimated that it was time for them to leave.

"I shall write to Miss Minturne to-morrow, Betty," whispered Mary, kissing her good-night.

"Do! And, oh, how I thank you and thank you, Mary, for thinking of me. I do think it is perfectly splendid of you. I'll talk it over with mother, and I know she will be delighted."

As they sped through the grounds Betty turned around in her seat.

"We have had a perfect evening, Mrs. Brooks, and thank you for it," she said.

"They are delightful people," answered Mrs. Brooks. "Mr. King is one of the few men who, when helping me on with my coat, do not make me feel old."

"Mrs. Brooks! You old!" came in a chorus of flattering reproach from the four girls.

"At least, you must let me say that 'I am not



so young as I once was,' " she answered, pleased with their evident sincerity.

" Mr. King talks a great deal about his own affairs," complained Gertrude. " I think it is greedy to take up all the conversation talking about yourself."

" He 's interested in his collection of old prints," said Dunny.

" He perfectly lectured about them," said Gertrude, who, for some reason, felt aggrieved and dissatisfied. " I felt like beginning a story just to keep him quiet. When I go to places where the people are great talkers I often start in that way, though I always let them talk a while before I leave, because it's disagreeable to hear one's own voice ringing in one's ears, and to know they are saying what a great talker you are."

Betty and Lois nudged each other. They had grown to love Edyth, but Gertrude's selfishness and worldly attitude kept them from anything more than a distant acquaintance. They wondered how Edyth, genuine and unselfish and clever, could remain her warm friend, and they could only explain it by the fact that they had grown up together.

" Now, Gertrude, I think you are expressing a



pessimistic view that you don't feel," said Edyth. "Gertrude is full of a bitter philosophy that she never acts upon, thank goodness," she added.

"Anyway, it was a jolly evening," declared Jack, and every one echoed his sentiment.



## XXII

### IN THE STUDY

**D**R. BAIRD stooped over his study table, on which lay a letter from Miss Minturne, noting with his forefinger an important point, then, after studying it for a moment, passing on, his eyes traveling slowly over the many pages.

Betty, curled up in his big armchair, watched him closely. She knew it would take him some time to grasp the business details, for his scholarly abstraction made it somewhat difficult for him to grasp a business proposition at a glance. She looked at him wistfully, at his fast-graying hair, his careworn face, and his bent shoulders, and her heart gave a great throb of pitying understanding of what life had meant to the gentle, reserved scholar, whose early and middle years had been spent far from his peers.

Yet he had loved research for its own sake, not for any renown that might come to him. She understood, too, that his heart was filled with the tenderest love for humanity, and an enthusiasm



which, though quiet and patient, was ever-abiding, and which found its own reward in contributing to that humanity's well-being and happiness.

Still, Betty could see the reverse side of the shield. He loved congenial discussion of his classical writers, and delighted in pleasantries and social relaxation with those who were interested in his special lines of study; but as long as she could remember, he had lived in a narrow valley, that somehow seemed to contract the spirit of those who dwelt within its limits, and where there had been no one with whom to exchange an idea, except about crops or politics or church news.

Now she, at seventeen, had been chafing under a slight disappointment; but down in her heart Betty realized that something deeper and sweeter than a mere youthful longing to try her wings was pushing her out.

She could see that more lines had come into her father's face since they moved to Long Island; that the city's strife and bustle were new to the retired scholar, and that night found him weary and often depressed with the weight of burdens that had been laid upon him. And here was this struggle to secure a home for himself



and family before old age or sickness superannuated him. This it was, Betty knew, that made her disappointments and failures hard to bear.

"I will help, I will!" she said to herself. "I am young and strong, and I have, I know I have, a gift that is worth something."

She mused a moment, with her chin lying in the pink palm of her hand, her eyes unseeingly following the pattern of the rug, until recalled by her father's voice.

"Daughter, I can support my only child, certainly," he said, looking up from the letter and throwing back his shoulders with a pathetic pride that set Betty's heart trembling with love and pain. He looked very thin and worn in the bright autumn light, and his clerical coat shone where it had been often brushed and pressed.

She jumped up and, going back of his chair, began to smooth his hair, then throwing her arms around his neck she buried her bright head on his shoulder. The clergyman's lined face shone and he drew her down on his knee and, putting his hand on either cheek, kissed the pretty quivering mouth. Without a word they understood each other.

"Now, father," Betty said briskly, sliding



down from his knee and sitting on a stool at his feet, "we must be very, *very* business-like."

They both laughed as if at the best joke in the world. When hearts are full, it takes little to bring either tears or laughter and it is the toss of a feather which it will be, for their sources lie very close together.

"Yes, I believe in looking things in the face," answered Dr. Baird, firmly, though no one shrank more consistently than he from seeing anything but the desirable where his family was involved. Although far from carelessly optimistic, he had a true scholar's disinclination to face any problem that disturbed his pursuits.

"Perhaps I should have stayed in Weston," he said, in a low voice, evidently going over an old problem, his head bent, and slowly fitting the tips of his fingers together. "But I felt it to be a call to come here. Home Missions have always been close to my heart. Sometimes I am afraid I am not fitted for work in this great city, that I was too old to take it up. I have lived in my study."

"No one is fitter than you, father," cried Betty, hotly. "You are in the prime of life, and you are young and handsome, too."

"We must not discuss *me*, Elizabeth," he said,



smiling and patting her cheeks that had flamed in indignant denial. "*Your* problem is under consideration now. Do you think you would be happy in New York? It is such a big place for my little daughter. I did not like the idea of your taking the library, but that was at home, and your mother did not object. Do you want to undertake this enterprise with Miss Minturne?"

"Father, I long, long, just *long* to. There!" cried Betty, laughing and standing up in front of him, and clasping her hands as she uttered the "There!" with an emphatic ring in her sweet voice.

"That's enough," said Dr. Baird, laughing too when she tumbled down in a heap at his feet. "I don't quite understand her proposition," he began, adjusting his glasses and looking over Miss Minturne's letter.

"Oh, must we understand it? She is a lady, and everything will be fair."

"It will be fair, of course. I should not question a lady's business honor. However, we may not be able to live up to her expectations. Did your mother understand her letter?"

"Mother said it was not clear, that she wrote mostly about irrelevant things, and that we would



have to make arrangements when we saw her; but she liked the tone of the letter."

"Your mother has keen insight."

"Do we have to talk any more about the business side, father? Can't we wait?" asked Betty. "Finance is dry, yes, and unprofitable too," she added, laughing, "for we are always exactly where we were before we began to discuss it. If talking about it would make one cent appear in our pocket where there was none before, it would be different, but it does n't make us a bit richer."

Dr. Baird listened with an amused smile.

"Elizabeth, you think I do not understand. I do. You are what I was at your age and for many years afterward. I could not patiently endure any keeping of accounts, any discussion of ways and means, any money calculations. Indeed, I am not sure even now that I know my multiplication table."

Betty was intensely interested. Her father had always appeared to her to be the quintessence of methodical ways, and she had believed that it was a natural gift.

"At college," he continued, "I frequently went without meals because I had not calculated, had not determined how to spend my money. If I



saw a book I wanted I bought it, and every month before my allowance from home was due my pocket was empty."

He laughed softly over the recollection of those college days; and the improvidence that had many and many a time led him to the book-stall instead of to the refectory was not the least pleasant in a throng of memories.

"You are just as well off now, father, and I do believe you enjoy the memory of those books more than you would have the good meals you might have had in their place then," urged Betty, with a shrewd little smile, following in imagination the line her father's thoughts had taken.

"Yes, I do," he admitted. "I was always at the mercy of a bookseller." He sighed, then smiled and took down one of the many volumes of a handsome edition of Livy. He shook his head almost reproachfully over it.

"He cost me many a meal," he said, and very lovingly he turned the leaves and patted the worn morocco binding.

Betty leaned over his shoulder with a new and almost devout interest in the fragrant book.

"Now how can you, father, in all conscience, preach to me, when you see the good results of your own wicked ways?" she said gayly, smooth-



ing the hair that was growing a little thin around the temples, and she felt that she had won.

“Sit down, Elizabeth. We must come to an understanding about this proposition.”

“I thought you and mother had decided that I could do exactly what I wanted to,” Betty answered. She was still standing, for she was afraid the question would find its way back to the commercial details. Her young enthusiasm could not brook too long a delay at the commonplace threshold of a new and wonderful experience where all her dreams were to be realized.

“You can easily understand, Elizabeth,” her father went on, disregarding her remark, “that I am more conscientious about affairs because of this early indifference to them. Now your mother is naturally practical, and she does not need to hold herself so rigidly to what I believe is the best way to conduct the purely business side of life. We grow very strong on any natural weakness as we grow older. That is, we people with consciences do.”

“If I go with Miss Minturne I ’ll make money.” Betty’s eyes looked very large over the idea.

“I can support you, daughter,” her father answered again, with a dignity that somehow held a touch of sadness, “but I cannot give you



what are called advantages." The sadness predominated over even the wounded pride.

"What advantages, father?"

"Travel, principally."

Betty's eyes shone.

"Oh, father, I'd love to see Rome and Florence and Venice!"

Her father regarded her steadily, while into his eyes crept a new look, the look of one who has his Carcassonne.

"Yet patient as my life has been,  
One dearest sight I have not seen.  
It almost seems a wrong —  
A dream I had when life was new ;  
Alas, our dreams they come not true ;  
I thought to see fair Carcassonne !  
I have not seen fair Carcassonne !"

"You may take the position, child," Dr. Baird said gently.

"Why, father, what made you yield so suddenly? What has weakened your pride, for mother said it was pride?"

Betty laughed, as she leaned against her father and gave him a joyous hug.

"Yes, it was pride, though masquerading under a somewhat different guise. I do not like the idea that I can't do everything for my only child, but I know that if I should die there



would be almost nothing for you. Fortunately, this new position will allow you to be at home every night. We can go and come on the same trains and have our luncheon together in a quiet place."

"I shall stay at the library until the end of the month, for I want that ninety dollars. It sounds awfully important, doesn't it?"

"You will be able to travel now, Betty. I always wanted to see the land of Virgil. Then later it was Palestine. Yes, most of all it was Palestine."

"Oh, father, we can go, both of us! I have been reading so many articles this summer on how to see Europe on two hundred and fifty dollars. I shall have that much soon."

"And your mother?"

Betty's face shadowed, then brightened.

"Nothing would make mother happier than to know that we are happy. She hates to travel, and we could not make her go. Aunt Rachel could stay with her for three months. They would both love it."

"No, child, the time has passed for me. There is a time for everything. I learn that lesson better every year. My time for traveling has passed. I am no longer eager."



"I think you ought to go for my sake," Betty said, using her best argument.

"Miss Greene will take you. But," he added, "how like us to be counting our chickens before they are hatched! I have not done it on this scale for twenty years."

"Nevertheless," said Betty, with an emphatic shake of her head, "these chickens *are* going to be hatched. I feel it in my bones, as Katie says. And you are going to Palestine with me, daddy mine, I *know* you are."



## XXIII

### BETTY MEETS MISS MINTURNE

“**O**H, I’m nearly crazy! Where is my hatpin, the one with the dull-black head? And my best handkerchief? Oh, Lois, I will be late!”

“If you have set your mind on being late —”

“How can I think of grammar at a time like this?” said Betty, petulantly. “Anyway, ‘will’ is as good as ‘shall.’”

“‘I will drown, nobody shall help me,’” quoted Lois, sarcastically, for as a result of the excitement the two friends had been having a little swordplay.

“Lois, you are as mean as you can be. You might help me,” cried Betty, crossly, dashing around, pulling open drawers and slamming doors.

“You will have to get a maid, Betty, if you don’t keep your things together better. What has come over you? At school you were systematic enough.”



" Criticisms are rather unnecessary at a time like this," Betty answered loftily, turning over the upper drawer of her chiffonnière in an effort to find her best handkerchief.

Lois stalked out of the room and sat down on the extreme edge of her bed. She was indignant at Betty and miserable herself in consequence, and the very edge of the bed seemed to fit her feelings. The friends had occasional tiffs, but in the end their friendship always came out whole, and not even the seams of its mending showed; though Mrs. Baird warned them that, when they grew older, these quarrels would be more serious and they would not have the wholesome young spirits that recover quickly. They loved each other, however, with a love founded on respect for each other's best qualities, and, while opposite temperamentally, they did not often clash to a greater extent than to display a few sparks of irony.

Betty ransached the closet for her fur scarf, — a charming bit of ermine her father had given her in Weston before the house-buying burden made such a gift an impossibility.

" Oh, Lois, where *is* my fur?" Betty cried impatiently, wholly unaware that her friend was sitting disconsolately on the edge of the bed.



"Where you threw it last night, I have no doubt," answered Lois, in a dignified voice.

Betty tossed her head. Her lack of time and the wonderful event that was pressing made her less keen to retort. The fur must be found at once, or she would miss the train. She could not imagine herself going to see Miss Minturne without that lovely fur.

Lois heard Betty open and shut drawers and closet doors, and her angry little temper softened. She half arose.

"I have it, no thanks to *you*," called Betty, and, without turning her head towards Lois's room, she ran downstairs.

Lois sat still on the edge of the bed. Betty was going to New York for the day, and, oh dear, how awful if there should be a wreck and Betty hurt, — dear Betty, who always grew impatient when she had to hurry too much and could n't find things! Lois knew just the things that Betty's otherwise equable temper could not stand, and one was the loss of a hatpin. She started up, intending to run downstairs, when she heard a great scurry of skirts, and Betty rushed in and hugged her.

"Forgive me, Lois. Oh, my hat! I was a bear, a crosspatch. I must skedaddle. I could n't



leave mad. A car might kill me. Something might happen to you while I'm away. Good-by! Come to the station for us. I'll have lots to tell. Good-by!" and down the steps she bounded.

Betty was going to the city to see Miss Minturne, who had, according to her circular, a studio school of Decoration and Applied Art. Betty was to learn the art of decorating and, in the meantime, her carfare and other expenses would be met by the salary she was to receive as Miss Minturne's assistant.

Of course the success of the whole plan depended on whether Miss Minturne would like Betty, for the position meant great intimacy, and Miss Minturne was extremely fastidious in choosing her friends. It depended, too, on whether Betty would prove to have the requisite gifts.

It was a delightful day, and, walking down Fifth Avenue with her father, Betty felt the tonic of the ocean breeze that swept through the long avenues; but the contact with the people, the surging sea of faces, thrilled her as nothing had ever done, — not even that wonderful night when she stood before an audience and felt the enthusiasm carried to her from hundreds of upturned faces, and heard soft music, and knew it was her commencement! Not even then was there such



a leaping of the heart, such a tingling to the finger-tips of mysterious excitement.

Oh, the people, the wonderful people, going endlessly, doing great and marvellous things, hurrying by with that look of deep concentration, with that rapid stride, that distinguished air, as of big things planned and executed!

The very hands of the men were different from those of the Weston and the Long Island men; the clenched fists, all handsomely gloved, gripped the heads of walking-sticks. Perhaps, under it, there was a dim symbolism of the way things were carried on in the city, — the lion's claws beneath the glossy lamb's skin.

With eager, expectant eyes Betty watched the hurrying passers-by. Each person was a story, a romance, a tragedy, or a comedy; the toddling children with their nurses were ballads; and her heart responded to a troop of merry schoolgirls who wheeled by under the careful surveillance of a prim teacher; but it did not go out to them as it did to those who seemed a part of the world of action. Betty, going to find her life's work, saw everything in a new light. She was no longer a mere onlooker.

The stores, the carriages, the newsboys, the cars, the shoppers, all that contributed to the



swing and tumult of the day, made her draw full breaths of exultation, for what, she could not have told, only to be alive! Oh, how good it was, how good to be alive and form an integral part of the busy world!

Her father, with his head slightly bent, saw nothing of the bustling city. His mind was dwelling on the day's work, and, more than all else, on the future of the lovely young daughter who almost danced by his side with the joy of being in the current of action. His daughter was his delight, his pride. His dreams were all for her. What would this day mean to her? His lips trembled. Betty saw only the magnificent power of the city; her father felt some of its crushing strength.

"Oh, father, isn't it too grand to be true?" called out Betty above the roar of the trolley, and seizing his coat as they pushed through the crowd.

A white-haired lady, stepping from her victoria, turned, on hearing the sweet young voice, and smiled when she saw the bright countenance. Many turned, even at that busy hour, to look again at the happy, fresh face, the beautiful eyes, that seemed to love the strange sights and people. The glamour of unfamiliarity concealed every



unpleasant sight and sound. Betty's own young heart and high purposes were the measure of her impressions. There was at least one perfectly happy face and care-free heart on Fifth Avenue that sparkling winter day.

Miss Minturne's studio was in one of those charming old-fashioned houses on lower Fifth Avenue that have yielded their reserve and pride to the demands of the business world, yet reluctantly, and in their reluctance still possessing something of their former grace and urbanity.

The immaculately white and shining marble floor and stairway, the air of retirement, of exclusiveness, after the glare and noise of the city, impressed Betty. It was to be another delightful world. At a white door they found the name.

"Father, look at that magnificent brass knocker!" exclaimed Betty, while they waited a moment to gain their breath and to adjust themselves to the contrast in light and atmosphere.

"Is my hat straight, father?" whispered Betty, facing him.

Her father looked at it conscientiously and nodded affirmatively.

A boy in buttons took their cards and ushered them into a small reception-room.



The room was white-and-green. Some odd pieces of brass and copper, a beautiful painted seat that, Betty was to learn, came from Brittany, a rug or two, and a quaint bit of tapestry, gave all the colors the room needed without disturbing its repose. A long horizontal window of leaded glass, with a seat underneath, added to the old-world air the room presented.

A door opened and a tall woman entered. Betty's first thought was of her height; her next, that everything would be exactly as she dreamed it would be, for with a woman like this fulfilment of dreams was a necessity.

Miss Minturne held out her hand to Dr. Baird, who had risen when she stepped in. Betty told Lois afterwards that she knew it would be "slim and cool." She gazed without restraint while Miss Minturne talked with her father, for, after a frankly open look of examination, she left Betty to herself.

Miss Minturne's face was pale, and her hair, beginning to turn gray, was parted in the middle, and though carefully arranged was so heavy that it fell into odd curves about her forehead and neck. It was like sculptured hair. Every feature was modelled, yet there was no monotony in her



appearance, for her rich personality asserted itself immediately.

Betty felt that all the throbbing, colorful, thrilling city life was concentrated in this strangely lovely woman. Yes, Jack Brooks was entirely right, Miss Minturne was "fascinating."

"I should like to show you the other rooms," Miss Minturne said, with an inquiring glance, and standing up.

The adjoining room was large and even more charming.

"This is the living-room, where we shall have our tea," she said, smiling at Betty and taking her hand for a moment, "and where we shall hope to see your father often."

All negotiations were begun and ended with those words and that quick, warm pressure of the hand. And this was Miss Minturne's way of saying she found Betty "all her mind and heart and taste desired," as she told an old friend that evening. Yet she prided herself on her business methods!

Even Dr. Baird, the least business-like of men, had an uneasy feeling that some formality was lacking, a word to the effect that Betty should come there, or something, he was not clear what; but not a word was said, and to the doctor it



would have seemed indelicate to introduce the subject to a lady.

Betty stayed throughout the day. Miss Minturne insisted on taking her to luncheon at her own home on Washington Square.

When her father called for her and the door had closed on the smiling face of her new friend, Betty sighed with the exhaustion of one who has had many months crowded into a day. She was eager to tell her mother and Lois every detail.

"Mother," cried Betty, throwing herself into her mother's arms, "it is better than you ever could imagine! I am happy, happy! We will soon have our house paid for."

She threw off her hat, picked up Edwynna, who was clinging to her dress, and danced madly about with her. At last she sank down on the sofa before the blazing fire, and Edwynna cuddled close to her, for she had missed her cousin this first day of separation.

Lois dropped gayly on the other side and Dr. and Mrs. Baird completed the semicircle.

"What is Miss Minturne like, Bet? Mary actually raved over her," was Lois's first question.

"No wonder she raved! She is like a heroine of a great novel. She's taller than I am, and not unlike a Rossetti."



Every one laughed. It was good to hear Betty again, and Lois, out of pure joy at having her home, began accusing her of exaggeration.

"She is a remarkable-looking woman," said the doctor, seriously, and then it was Betty's turn to jeer good-naturedly at Lois.

"She has a perfect nose," said Betty, "and with that tightness of the skin across the bridge that gives people such a look of distinguished, though wearied, refinement."

"If that isn't like Betty," laughed Lois. "Who ever heard of a nose of 'wearied refinement'!"

"I didn't say that, did I? Noses are distinguished, and that sort of pulled look does give people a refined look. Maybe it's because they are sick or thin. Anyway, it's highbred," Betty insisted. She always had new valuations for personal characteristics.

"You say, too, that large veins in an old lady's hand are 'distinguished,'" mocked Lois, merrily.

"Those of a certain kind are. Those are the hands that have splendid family rings on."

"How old is Miss Minturne?" asked Mrs. Baird, smiling indulgently at the happy wrangle.

"I never can tell ages, mother. I noticed that



she went down some dark stairs sidewise and held her dress up in front while it trailed in the back. Young people never do those things. No matter what she does, she is glorious! I just adore the cool, highbred, indifferent air women like Miss Minturne have."

"Your description is graphic, Betty, but hardly definite," said Mrs. Baird, laughing.

Betty laughed too, and leaned back comfortably, with her hands clasped behind her head.

"Oh, Betty, begin at the beginning and go right through the day," pleaded Lois.

"I have so much to tell that I can't tell a thing, Lois," wailed Betty. "There was her house on Washington Square. It's my ideal."

"You said the same thing about Mary King's," laughed Lois, laying her head on Betty's shoulder, and Betty retaliated by jerking her shoulder away.

"Girls, girls, do be quiet! I am anxious to hear the news."

"There isn't any news, Carissima. It's all impressionistic. Miss Minturne gives you impressions all the time. The impressions are fine, and who wants details?"

"What was more ideal about her house



than Mary's?" asked Lois, now sitting at some distance.

"It was n't more ideal, but different. Miss Minturne's has a historic, storied look —"

"Storied! Ah!" murmured Lois.

Betty ignored her.

"Oh, mother, we had the best dessert for luncheon. I must find out how it was made. *My Mother's Cookery Journal* would be crazy over it."

Mrs. Baird saw that it was hopeless, so far as her daughter was concerned, and turned to her husband with a question.

The doctor gave what explicit details he could, but he, too, found that the interview with Miss Minturne had been "impressionistic."

The door-knocker sounded, and Edwyna, who always hurried to open the door, threw it wide to Mary and her husband.

"Just a moment. We are on our way home from New York, but I could not go by without seeing you, and hearing how you liked Miss Minturne," said Mary in a breathless way, standing, and refusing all inducements to sit down, though she warmed her hands at the fire. "Oh, Mrs. Baird," she went on, "I must congratulate you. Miss Minturne fell in love with Betty. It



is a great compliment, for she is very exacting. But if she once cares for any one it's for life, and she is the most wonderful woman in the city. She says — don't let Bet hear this — that she is her ideal of a young girl. What could be nicer? No, thank you, I won't sit down. I must go."

Mr. King was shaking with laughter at Mary's volubility, for no one had had a word since she came in, and with hurried good-bys they were again in their car.



## XXIV

### THE UNKNOWN BIDDER

**T**HE day was clear and crisp but not too bitingly cold. The Avenue was filled with an eager throng. Faces looked over fur collars with a clear redness of skin and a brightness of eyes that, added to the springy steps, gave an air of festivity to the great thoroughfare.

Betty loved weather like this, when she had to walk briskly yet was not too cold to linger a moment at an enticing window. To-day she had prepared for a long walk to an uptown store. A messenger boy followed, ready to carry home her parcels. Betty's blue suit, of a rough weave, and the white beaver hat, with a rosette of gilt braid and a pink rose which nestled against her light-brown hair, made her, with her young, happy face, her tall, slim figure, her quick step and eager glance, a charming picture.

Betty's mind was on the room which they were furnishing for a friend of Miss Minturne's. If this proved satisfactory they were to redecorate



the entire house. Unfortunately for Miss Minturne, Miss Stacey limited her to a certain amount, and expressed a desire for a furnishing that was both expensive and difficult to obtain.

Early that morning Miss Minturne had found Betty in the study, buried in a huge portfolio of plates of furniture. She stood looking at her for a moment, while a pleased light came into her gray eyes as the girl, unaware of her presence, studied the designs.

"By the way," Miss Minturne broke in upon Betty's studies, "there's a plate showing exactly the kind of chest I want for Miss Stacey. I *must* have one!" She proceeded to describe it minutely, pointing out to her pupil all the characteristic marks. "That room would be perfect if I had a chest like this picture," she continued. "I have looked everywhere for it. Sallie Stacey won't consider it a success without that chest. She is that way." Miss Minturne looked grieved.

"We shall find it yet," Betty returned, with youthful hope in the improbable.

"I have looked through every antique shop a dozen times and none of them have one, and I haven't time to send to London. I'd take a hundred dollars out of my own pocket to get it. Sallie Stacey never did love me, and now she



thinks she will show me up as an impostor, a faddist who cannot do genuine professional work. No matter what the remainder of the furnishings are, if I don't have that chest she will talk to everybody as if it were a complete failure. In the old days she was never happy until she had given a handsomer dinner or a larger reception than I did, and had all the lions. As for admirers — ”

Miss Minturne stopped short and pressed her lips tightly together, and Betty knew that the memory of old rivalries still rankled. In a moment, however, Miss Minturne was her usual bright self, and she began to talk rapidly about her plans, particularly those for that day, for she was going out of town until evening.

On her way up the Avenue, Betty was thinking of this conversation and longing to help Miss Minturne justify herself in the eyes of her former rival. She was young enough to love a contest of power. The shy red came into Betty's face when she went over the last words Miss Minturne had said:

“ It's so good, sweetheart, to have some one to talk over these things with, some one who always understands.”

“ If poor Miss Minturne does n't find her chest she will be terribly disappointed,” she thought.



She hurried along, abruptly stopping at a window now and then, and as abruptly turning away.

She reached her destination, and after an hour or two had made her purchases, and with the parcels safely placed in the messenger's sturdy arms, she began her homeward walk. Passing several antique furniture shops, she darted into each one to see if, by any chance, a chest of the right period and dimensions had been received. To her joyful amazement she saw, in a large auction room, a chest that, so far as her judgment and memory went, was the very thing Miss Minturne wanted.

Trembling with surprise and excitement, Betty bent over the longed-for piece of carved oak. She asked to have it measured. She examined the locks, the feet, the interior, the carving. She had it turned over and over. The man smiled a little at her pretence of knowledge, and only her winsome face gained from him the attention he believed thrown away.

Looking at her catalogue, she found it was time for the sale. The chest was number nineteen on the list.

Miss Minturne was out of the city for the day. What should she do? On whom could she call for help in this emergency? If she bought the



chest she would have to leave a deposit on it at once. She had no money. Fortunately, she had Miss Minturne's card with her. She would use that, and, if necessary, her diamond ring that had been redeemed from its servitude at the pawnshop.

But the chest might be a clever reproduction. Oh, horrors! What should she do? Should she run the risk of buying a reproduction, or lose the chest, — the chest that Miss Minturne had lain awake nights trying to plan some means of procuring? It seemed cowardly to disappoint her because of the fear of making a mistake. She must run the risk. She must buy it. If it proved a mistake she would again pawn her ring.

The auctioneer had begun his sing-song "Going, going," by the time Betty had resolved to do and dare, and the old carved chest was put up for sale.

Poor Betty waited, her heart beating wildly as one, then another, bid on it. At last the bidders dwindled down to two, who seemed very much in earnest, then Betty raised her catalogue for the next bid. She was regarded with amazement by those who knew that the quiet elderly man in the same row of chairs with her, who



nodded his bids so unostentatiously, had millions back of him.

Presently the third bidder stopped, and it lay between Betty and the elderly man, who leaned over to see his opponent, when, for the first time, a change came into his immobile face and a twinkle crept into his eyes. Betty, feeling her heart sink as the bids rose, did not glance towards him.

Her opponent, smiling behind his short gray mustache, raised the bids by such small amounts that the auctioneer spoke irritably about it, but seeing who the bidder was, he accepted, with what meekness he could, the small advances, and kept patiently on with the one dollar additions. The gray-haired man watched Betty with amused eyes, and perhaps she was the only one in the room who did not know that the great millionaire was, for some reason, giving her the benefit of the sale.

Frightened at her own audacity, and quivering at every increase of the price, Betty kept bravely on, her lip trembling, and only her courage and her love for Miss Minturne keeping her to the straining conflict. Oh, if that man would only stop! Oh, if Miss Minturne were only here!

These wishes were hardly formulated, for the



sharp bidding had to be kept up. Once she could not make out where they were and had to ask the auctioneer in a frightened voice.

Just when Betty had reached the limit set by Miss Minturne, her opponent shook his head. He would not bid again. And the chest was Betty's! Her eyes were suffused, and she could not collect her thoughts when the attendant came to get her name and the customary deposit. She had n't any money! She drew a long breath and handed Miss Minturne's card to him. The man took it, smiling, and carried it to the bookkeeper, who looked down the room at Betty and shook his head. The attendant came back, looking less smiling.

"You are not Miss Minturne?" he said, inquiringly.

"No, but I am her — representative," Betty managed to say.

"Is there any one here who can identify you?" he asked.

"No, I am quite a stranger," Betty was forced to reply.

The man pondered a moment, while Betty gazed around the room, hoping to see some friend of Miss Minturne's whom she had met at her numerous afternoon teas. Her eyes fell on the gray-haired man, and her face brightened.



"Why, there is Mr. Anstice! He will identify me."

"Mr. Anstice!" exclaimed the surprised youth, turning to where that gentleman was trying to catch Betty's eye and smiling pleasantly.

In a moment he was seated beside Betty and identifying her to the complete satisfaction of all concerned.

"I am so thankful," sighed Betty, turning to him. "I have had *such* a time getting that chest! Oh, Mr. Anstice, it is genuine, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is genuine," Mr. Anstice answered, smiling his quiet amused smile, for he saw endless fun to come out of this episode, and he loved a joke better even than his antiques, and almost as much as he admired Miss Minturne. He was delighted that Betty had not discovered in him her rival bidder for the chest.

"I am so relieved that you think it is genuine," said Betty, starting up. "I must get out for a little fresh air."

Mr. Anstice followed, for the chest was the only thing in the collection he had wanted. When they reached the door the color began to creep back into Betty's face.

"Oh, Mr. Anstice, it was perfectly awful!"



she began, while they walked down the Avenue. "I don't know who was bidding against me, but I was dreadfully afraid he had more money than I had. I wonder if he was much disappointed? I should hate to have him disappointed, but it could not mean as much to any one else as to Miss Minturne. But it does seem as though one *could n't* lose when one begins bidding. I wonder if it is n't like gambling, — I mean the desperate feeling. I did n't know what I should do when they refused to take Miss Minturne's card. It looked as if I were an impostor, and I was terrified because I thought they would n't let me have the chest."

Mr. Anstice was pulling fiercely at his short mustache while Betty talked on. She was excited, for the strain had been long and hard, and she felt a certain relaxation in talking it over. Her companion was naturally silent, and to-day he had less than usual to contribute to the conversation, for he was determined to keep his part in the affair concealed until he saw Miss Minturne.

When they reached the studio Mr. Anstice said he would go in to see how Miss Minturne felt about the chest.

"She may be home by this time, though she



thought she would not be able to return until evening," Betty said.

"I'll come in and see, and perhaps, when she finds you have bought the chest, she will be in a particularly genial mood, and invite me to have a cup of tea."

They found Miss Minturne in the studio, and at first Betty ran impulsively to her to tell the news, though rather put out that Mr. Anstice was there to spoil the tale; but, trained by her mother to give way before older people, she did not begin, but went into another room. This did not suit Mr. Anstice at all, and he followed her.

"Aren't you going to tell Miss Minturne about your great piece of luck?"

"I thought—I didn't want to intrude—" stammered Betty.

Miss Minturne came in and pulled her down on a settle by her side, asking how she had spent the morning.

Betty blushed and looked at Mr. Anstice.

"If that horrid man would only go," she thought. She admired him, but she could not go over the story as she wished before him. She had told him a part, but not that it was Miss Minturne's great need that had made her so



desperate, for that she considered a business secret.

"Why, what does this mean?" Miss Minturne asked, looking from Mr. Anstice to Betty and back again.

"Miss Minturne, I did an awful thing, perfectly awful," commenced Betty, "but it turned out all right, I am sure, for Mr. Anstice says it's genuine."

"Now, Betty, evidently you have a story, and won't you please begin somewhere near the beginning?" begged Miss Minturne, laughing, yet anxious to fathom the mystery. She and Mr. Anstice had been lifelong friends, and, though he was an enigma to the world, Miss Minturne knew him through and through, and he did not object to her knowledge, having loved her hopelessly since his tenth year, as he told every one, and now she saw that he was brimming over with some joke, probably at her expense.

"Where shall I begin?" asked Betty, tapping her foot on the rug and looking inquiringly into Miss Minturne's gray eyes.

"It seems years since this morning. I bought the things you needed at Dean's. Then on my way home I passed Liso's auction rooms, — and, you know, I never pass without going in, — and,



oh, Miss Minturne, will you believe it, I saw exactly the kind of chest you want, the right size and all, for I measured it!"

"Now, isn't it too bad that I was away! Things always happen so!" she moaned, speaking to Mr. Anstice. "I have longed, almost prayed, for that chest, and to be away this morning of all mornings, and this poor child unknown and — Oh, well, my luck is certainly deserting me. Everything went wrong with me this morning."

Several times Betty tried to interrupt, but Miss Minturne was facing Mr. Anstice during her woeful monologue, and would not listen.

Mr. Anstice's smile persisted.

"How can you smile when you know the pride I take in my work and the hard time I have had proving it is not a rich woman's fad?" asked Miss Minturne, reproachfully.

"I am perfectly chastened. I shall try to be more discreet," Mr. Anstice returned, pulling a long face. He looked at Betty.

"But, Miss Minturne," almost screamed Betty, "I bought the chest."

At Miss Minturne's expression of utter amazement, Theodore Anstice laughed until tears filled his eyes.



“It is worth my entire collection of chests, Isabelle, to see you at this moment.”

“Betty, how could you do it?” she asked, dazed. “You did n’t have enough money to pay down, and no one knows you —”

“Mr. Anstice identified me.”

“Oh, were you there?”

“Yes, Miss Minturne; and Mr. Anstice says it is genuine. That was what frightened me most. I thought it might be a reproduction. Oh, I had a terrible time! A horrid person — I think it was a man — kept bidding on and on, and I was so afraid he might have more money than I, for I would not go beyond your price, but the ogre stopped suddenly, and you have the chest!”

“Ogre!” exclaimed Mr. Anstice, under his breath. “Say, that’s a good one! Ogre!” and Mr. Anstice chuckled all the way home.

“What is this I hear about a chest?” asked Dr. Baird. They sat as usual around the fire after dinner.

Betty told the joyous story, and even drowsy Edwyna opened her eyes with interest when she heard of the mighty Homeric struggle. To quiet Mrs. Baird these graphic descriptions of the hurry and competition of New York seemed very much like a dream.



"I am glad my lot was cast in less strenuous circumstances. I don't see how you stand it, little daughter."

"It is a strain," said Betty, thoughtfully, "but I don't feel it because I come home every night. I am sorry for those who never get out of it. Yet there is something good, too, in feeling yourself a part of humanity. Out here one is more a part of nature."

"It was the original plan for people to live in a garden, wasn't it?" asked Lois, turning respectfully to the doctor, for Lois loved to discuss Biblical subjects. They began one of their long discussions, and Betty and Edwyna had their evening secrets before the sandman came around.

Edwyna sat on a stool at Betty's feet with her little arms resting on her cousin's knees, her sweet baby face, now grown round and pink, lifted up adoringly.

"You are the image of a Grinling Gibbon's cherub," cried Betty, smothering her with kisses. "How many quarrels has the cherub had with Dotty to-day?"

Edwyna stood up and whispered into Betty's ears a sad tale of Dotty's greed in wanting to play all the time with the Queen of Hearts,



not letting the cherub have it for a single minute.

Betty opened her eyes wide with astonishment and whistled sympathetically. Edwyna continued to whisper. Her grievances were many when she found a good listener. Betty grew more and more indignant at Dotty's actions, and the fascinating secrets were prolonged until Betty had dexterously carried Edwyna up to the much-hated bed.



## XXV

### BETTY'S CLIENT

“**M**OTHER, what do you think?” cried Betty, giving Mrs. Baird a hug, then tearing out her hatpins wildly, and throwing her hat on a table, her coat on one chair and gloves on another, each toss expressive of triumphant exultation.

“Oh!” She threw herself into a chair and hurled her overshoes to the hearth. “Everybody guess what has happened.”

“You are going to decorate some one’s house,” cried Lois, jumping up and clapping her hands.

“Sit down, child,” said Betty, with a lofty wave of her hand. “You are not even warm. Now, mother.”

“Miss Minturne has paid you a — well, a dozen compliments, as many as you have chairs occupied now,” her mother replied, her amused eyes going from chair to chair.

“A compliment!” sniffed Betty, in fine disdain.

She looked around at Edwyna, who was running, panting, into the room, vexed that her



cousin had gotten in without her seeing her first, and who climbed into her lap and kissed her demonstratively.

"Eddie, guess what nice thing has happened to Cousin Betty?"

Edwyna looked wise.

"Somebody gave you a box of candy," she said, gazing significantly at a white box Betty had dropped on the sofa.

Betty hugged her, laughing.

"'A word to the wise'—that's to me—'is sufficient,'" she said, and opened a dainty white box of Huyler's.

Gravely and carefully Edwyna selected her favorite sweets and then slid down to the floor in front of the open fire.

"Well!" broke out Betty. She turned impressively to her mother and Lois. "I have had two articles accepted by *The Domicile!*"

Mrs. Baird's eyes beamed with pride and she kissed Betty and smoothed back the hair from the white forehead she loved.

"You haven't heard all. I am to write a series!"

Betty's voice grew almost sepulchral in her efforts to give adequate expression to her fullness of heart and pride of achievement.



"What does all this mean?" asked Dr. Baird, who had been compelled to take a later train and had not heard the news.

Betty had always loved to give startling information, but to-day she could not answer her father, and ran upstairs, leaving that pleasant task to her more than willing mother. She went straight to her own room, where she had written the "literary essays," — the room where she had read and reread the letters of the sad, polite editors; where she had realized that pickles, even Betty's Best Brand, failed to give spice to life, that preserves cloyed, and that purple-top turnips were but a ravishing vision; and where she had christened the library the "Silver-lining Library," in honor of Mr. Webbie's henchman, Mr. Cloud. Despite all these awakenings, Betty's faith in life was unspoiled, and her splendid courage had not failed. And now her faith was justified.

Finally she stole down to the little circle. Very quietly her father made a place for her at his side.

The sweet-smelling hickory leaped and blazed on the hearth, and for a few minutes not a sound was heard but its cheerful crackling. Old Katie found the group silent, but smiling, when she



stood on the threshold for an instant, surveying them fondly before she announced, "Dinnah sarved, Miss Helen."

The busy winter passed rapidly for Betty. Every month an article on household decoration appeared in *The Domicile*, and its readers were beginning to ask who this "B. B." was who had such sensible original ideas. Betty did not deny Lois's assertion that she never passed a newsstand without peeping into one of the magazines to catch a glimpse of the fascinating articles.

"I don't do it," she explained, "because I think they are good. I have n't any opinion about their merits. I feel that they must be poor because I wrote them; but then I know that the editor would not publish trash, so I don't think of it. But oh, how it stirs me to see 'B. B.' and know it's me!"

"'Me!' Listen to the great authoress!" laughed her mother.

"Actually, mother, my articles don't seem real to me. My eyes sort of slide over the words. I can't take them in as I do other people's."

The third article had appeared when, one day, as Betty sat working over some designs, a card was brought to her.

"This must be for Miss Minturne. I don't



know any one of the name of Dosworth," said Betty to the maid, looking at the card. "Take it to Miss Minturne."

"The lady asked for Miss B. B., and she said I was to say they sent her here from *The Domicile* magazine."

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Betty, springing up. "It is for me. Say I'll be there in a moment," and she hurried over to a mirror to smooth her hair, then flew up a flight of stairs to wash her hands.

A small, dignified-looking woman of about fifty stood up when Betty came into the room.

"I fear I have made a mistake," she began. "I should like to see the woman 'B. B.' who writes for *The Domicile*. I am deeply interested in her ideas."

Poor Betty trembled. It was the first time she had even remotely heard or thought of herself as a woman, and she felt dazed; but surely, girl or woman, she had written those articles.

"I — I — wrote them," she said deprecatingly.

"You!" exclaimed the lady, and the "You" had the ominous Webbie ring.

"Yes, Mam," said poor Betty, so embarrassed that the old-fashioned form she had used conscientiously when a child leaped out. She blushed



scarlet when she heard her slip, and tears came into her eyes.

"You are so — young," said Mrs. Dosworth, seeing Betty's embarrassment. "I was taken wholly by surprise. I was told at the office where to find you, and that 'B. B.' was a woman. That was all I could learn."

"That is all they know, because, you see, Miss Minturne said it would be better for me not to let them know that I was so young, for it might make them think less of my stuff."

Mrs. Dosworth smiled, thinking that Miss Minturne, whoever she might be, was a wise counsellor, for she herself feared to ask this young girl to help her in furnishing a Memorial Library in which she was deeply interested, and about which she had come to consult "B. B."

"Are you here alone?" she asked, somewhat incredulously.

"No. Miss Minturne has the studio and knows everything."

This tribute to the woman she admired slipped quite unconsciously from Betty's lips, for the one thought uppermost in her mind these days was Miss Minturne's vast knowledge in all things pertaining to her profession.



"I should like to meet her if she is not too busy."

"Please excuse me and I shall tell her," acquiesced Betty.

"Oh, Miss Minturne," she cried when she found her, "a lady — Dosworth by name — came to see me about those articles in *The Domicile*, and she nearly fainted when she saw what an Impeccable Webbie kid I was. She won't even talk to me, she's that disappointed and disgusted; and I believe she'll stop taking the magazine on account of their publishing things by such a dreadfully young girl."

Miss Minturne laughed at Betty's quick imagination flashing from this occurrence to the woman's act of stopping her subscription.

"Well, Betty, if I don't soon get to her and stop her — and you — you will be composing her haughty letter to the editor discontinuing *The Domicile*."

Miss Minturne loved Betty's ways and found herself, she said, growing young in the girl's youthful fancy and keen, unspoiled interest in life and things as they crowded about her.

Mrs. Dosworth's relief was evident when she saw Miss Minturne's tall figure and gray hair.

"I have just been talking with this young



girl," she began cordially, and smiling sweetly at Betty, as she might, Betty said afterwards, at a child who had shown some fascinating baby trick.

Miss Minturne's face grew cold and puzzled.

"Young girl?"

"Yes," pursued Mrs. Dosworth, raising her voice slightly, as if Miss Minturne were deaf or obtuse. "This young 'B. B.,' " she added, facetiously.

"I fancy you refer to my associate, Miss Betty Baird," answered Miss Minturne, with a note of interrogation in her voice.

Mrs. Dosworth reddened.

"She is very young, you know, and I was surprised," she explained apologetically.

"Young people are doing original things these days."

"I fear I am old-fashioned. I hope Miss Baird will pardon my lack of ardor, or was it courtesy?"

"Oh, please don't," said Betty, who disliked, above everything, to have an apology addressed to her.

Miss Minturne interrupted her.

"These articles by Miss Baird are indeed the best things we have had for a long time. I think they are sufficient proof of her ability."



Mrs. Dosworth looked chastened, and Miss Minturne, seeing it, at once proceeded to make herself agreeable, as only she could, her gift in fascination amounting to genius.

Mrs. Dosworth was skilfully drawn out about her plans for the library, to be placed in one of the small towns in New Jersey. It was to be a memorial to her late husband, and she put her whole heart into it. Miss Minturne was soon all enthusiasm, and the three talked and planned until luncheon time, when Miss Minturne asked Mrs. Dosworth to luncheon with them in her home, that they might continue the subject.

Before Mrs. Dosworth left, it was settled that Betty, with Miss Minturne's help, was to make the designs for the decoration of the library, and submit them to her for consideration.

Betty immediately began on the absorbing undertaking. She loved color and had always taken keen delight in color schemes of any kind, and now here was her opportunity to put into practice all the ideas she had written about for *The Domicile*.



## XXVI

### SUCCESS

“**M**RS. DOSWORTH has written, Betty, darling.”

“Oh, what *did* she say, Miss Minturne?” asked Betty, anxiously, drawing near Miss Minturne’s desk.

“I have read only half the letter. Let me see. She is delighted with your designs and colors. She has adopted them with scarcely an alteration.”

Betty whirled around on one foot, waving her hand, and crying, —

“Three Cheers for Dosworth Library!” Then dropping down on the couch, she listened breathlessly to the letter. That Miss Minturne too was excited was evidenced by the red spots on her cheeks and her bright eyes and quick, nervous reading.

“Well, this *is* a triumph for a beginner!” she exclaimed, when she had finished, thrusting the letter into its envelope, her pleasure growing as she realized all it meant to the girl by her side.



"I am so glad, Miss Minturne," said Betty, "so awfully glad and proud. And I owe it all to you," she added, taking Miss Minturne's hand and kissing it lovingly. Then, though she felt some awe of the dignified woman, she threw her arms around her waist and gave her one of the "bear hugs" she usually saved for her parents.

Miss Minturne, kissing Betty tenderly, said, with tears in her eyes:

"It has been a long time, child, since I have been kissed by any one who loved me."

She stood up, and going over to her table, began to sort the mail briskly, and returned to her old way of laughing and taking life as a clever comedy.

But Betty could not go calmly on in the old routine. It was all new and glorious. She longed to tell the home folks, for her first and strongest impulse, when anything unexpected came to her, was to tell some one; and now she must tell somebody about the Dosworth Library, if she had to go out and take one of those wonderful policemen by his shining buttons and hold him till the tale was done.

Miss Minturne was trying to pick up the day's work.



“Miss Minturne —” Betty hesitated.

Miss Minturne smiled.

“I think — I really do — I’ll *burst* if I don’t tell some one about Dosworth Library.”

Miss Minturne leaned back in her chair and laughed as Betty did not imagine she could ever have laughed even in childhood.

“Oh, you darling child! Of course you must tell some one. What have I become? I am a stick, and I am so dull I am not even a silver-headed walking-stick, just a lump!”

Betty had heard enough of Miss Minturne to know that a “lump” expressed her deepest scorn of frail human intelligence and feeling. It was far worse than being a “clod.”

“How can we celebrate? Where can you go? To whom can you tell the news?”

“I think father could spare the time to listen if you don’t need me. It’s three hours till luncheon, when I shall see him, of course, but I can’t wait three hours!” Betty, though deeply in earnest, saw the humor clearly enough to join in Miss Minturne’s merriment.

“Put your hat on at once, Betty, and go and tell your father, and if you see Mr. Anstice tell him too. He knows that you were working on the plans.”



Miss Minturne's eyes twinkled when she said this, anticipating Mr. Anstice's delight in being stopped on his way to his office, where business was transacted in millions, to hear a glowing account of the New Jersey library. It would, she knew, give him a taste of the long-forgotten joy of youth.

"He will be pleased, won't he?" answered Betty. "I hope I shall see him. He has never got over that chest. I never knew a man who took such an interest in things."

She did not meet Mr. Anstice, but she did see Jack Brooks with his mother in his automobile.

Something in her face stopped them and Betty told in a few words, thrilling with enthusiasm, about the Dosworth Library.

She was so free from conceit that, while her words seemed to relate to some marvellous event, she never played the part of the heroine. It was the romantic and astounding fact, not her part in it, that gave such a glamour to Betty's narrative. The world was a beautiful place and in it, as in any wonderland, strange and unexpected gifts dropped continually. To-day it was the Dosworth Library. It did not matter much on whom they dropped. She was absolutely impersonal about it.



It was this trait that endeared her to every one. It was this that made people young when with her. They felt a return to that enchanting period in life when any door might lead to fairy-land, any tree shower down golden apples; and every rainbow had its bag of gold, every country its golden fleece. No wonder Miss Minturne had grown not only to love her, but to find that things were flat without her views, her translations of them into terms of youth, terms that are, after all, the abiding ones.

“Adorable youth!” Mr. Anstice was wont to exclaim after he and Betty had had a long talk about life. At first the exclamation disconcerted her, but his kind, tired eyes smiled back into hers and she was satisfied not to understand, but to believe in him as she did in Miss Minturne. She classed it, to use his own adjective, as “adorable” irony.

After telling the Brookses the good report from the library, Betty sped up Fifth Avenue. In a whirl—not unlike that in her own brain—Betty was swept up in the elevator to the tenth story of the immense building where her father was. She found him alone in his office.

“Oh, father,” she cried, throwing herself into his arms, “we can all go to Europe now. Miss



Minturne has just received a letter from Mrs. Dosworth, and she says the color scheme, the style of furniture, the plans about the books — you helped there, and so did my experience in the Silver-lining Library — are all satisfactory. Isn't it wonderful!"

"I knew it was in you, Elizabeth, and now you have proven it. And after all your discouragements! How pleased your mother will be! Why, I can hardly wait to go home to tell her."

"I know now whom I take after," laughed Betty, delighted with her father's almost boyish glee in the news. "I simply had to tell you. Now I must hurry back, for I have to begin work."

The next day Miss Minturne was at her desk addressing dainty envelopes. The pile grew higher and higher.

"Betty!" she called, without turning her head or looking up.

In an instant Betty was by her side.

"Now, child, read this and tell me how many you will need for your own friends."

Betty took up one of the finely engraved notes and could scarcely believe her eyes when she ran across her own name. It was an invita-



tion to a reception in the studio rooms to be given for "Miss Baird."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and she stood stockstill, looking at the invitation.

"This is to be a little afternoon affair," Miss Minturne explained, "a sort of coming-out for you, an artistic coming-out, instead of a social one, though it will be both, for I have asked my special friends, the ones you will care most for, and you must ask all the friends you want."

Betty was speechless. She knew how busy and preoccupied Miss Minturne was, and to take this time and trouble for her!

"Miss Minturne," she began in a voice shaking with feeling; then she broke down and ran from the room.

Of course Lois was to participate in everything just as Betty herself did, and it would be, in that way, a coming-out tea for Lois in New York, though she had been formally presented to society at her own home in Baltimore.

The two friends had a glorious evening going over the names of people to be invited. There were all the teachers at The Pines and the few girls that remained who had been their particular friends. Mrs. King was, of course, the first name written down. Dorothy, unfortunately, was still



abroad. Jessie Bentworth was too far off to come, but she received an invitation. Caroline Wren and Helen Dyke would come. The girls in Weston could not accept, but they should receive invitations, every one of them. And Bishop Waborne and his grandsons, Paul and Reginald. One name remained, Miriam Kendall, Miriam, who had made Betty's first year at The Pines so hard. Miriam lived in New York, but Lois and Betty had not yet run across her.

"Yes, I shall send one to Miriam. Life is too short for continuing such wretched feelings," said Betty, putting down Miriam's name.

"I think so, too," said Lois, heartily. "I was hoping you would decide that way."

When Betty told her mother she kissed her, saying gently:

"This is best of all, little daughter."



## XXVII

### THE RECEPTION

THE studio was charmingly lighted by scores of candles. Spring flowers fresh from the ground abounded, the tang of wet earth and sunshine and spring rains still clinging to them. Burnished copper mingled its soft glow with the sunny gleams of old brass; Sheffield plate and Queen Anne silver hobnobbed with quaint pewter pieces; priceless Eastern rugs covered the floor and were like counterparts of the stained glass through which the waning daylight flickered.

And Betty's bouquets! They were banked on mantelpieces, tables, everywhere. Mr. Anstice sent a countless number. He vowed that Betty should have more than any other debutante in all Greater New York. Then there were the Kings' and Mrs. Brooks's, Jack's and Craig's and Dunny's and Mrs. Dosworth's, while several dozens came from the friends of Miss Minturne, who had grown to be friends with Betty at the many afternoon teas. The Pines girls and teach-



ers sent another dozen or more, and Bishop Waborne himself sent roses with many wishes for Betty's health and happiness. Paul's offering was an immense cluster of yellow roses of the same variety as the one she wore the night they met at The Pines. Reginald's was orchids. Altogether, Betty had outrivalled every one in her number of bouquets, and even Mr. Anstice was satisfied.

Betty's gown was exquisite, a present from her cousin, Miss Payne. It was of sheer white material and made with the highest art, the result being a gown not only modish, but of charming simplicity.

Lois was very attractive in a Parisian gown, a fluffy pink, and she carried a few lilies of the valley from a bouquet Dunny had sent her. Her gentle, highbred face framed in the dark hair was smiling and happy, and her cheeks, since coming to the country, had become delightfully rosy.

The two girls stood surrounded. Jack with his mother and Dunny had come early, and Jack announced immediately that nothing would drive him away until the last guest had departed. He had come to stay, and Dunny backed him royally in his determination. Mrs. Brooks was going on to another reception by and by.



"Two old schoolmates from Kip Academy are coming. It's a surprise for you, so I won't say another word," said Jack, turning hastily away.

"Oh, how mean!" exclaimed Betty. "Lois, he has a surprise for me and won't tell what it is."

"Listen to a girl's logic," returned Jack, looking very superior. "As if a surprise would be a surprise if told," and he took his friend Dunny's arm and pretended to walk away.

"Do, do tell me," pleaded Betty, her curiosity aroused.

"What is Jack teasing you about?" asked Mary King.

"Mary, he has a surprise and he won't tell me what it is," answered Betty. "Oh, good! There's Craig Ellsworth!" Unmindful of her place in a very informal receiving line, Betty hurried off to greet the Clammerboy.

Of course Jack and Craig were acquainted, and they with Mary and Lois soon formed an interested circle around Dr. and Mrs. Baird.

"Does n't Mrs. Baird look like a picture in that fashionable dress and hat against that background of old-rose wall!" whispered Lois to Mary as they came up.



Lois drew close to Mrs. Baird.

"Oh, is n't this the loveliest reception you ever saw! And is n't Betty glorious!"

"It is delightful." Mrs. Baird's eyes followed her daughter in spite of her efforts to appear interested in other things. Betty was now welcoming three young ladies, very beautifully gowned, who, with the perfect ease of those accustomed to many social affairs, entered gracefully.

"Why, Mrs. Baird, there are three of The Pines girls. One is Miriam Kendall! Think of it!"

"Which one is Miriam?" asked Mrs. Baird.

"The small, dark-eyed one. The other is Caroline Wren, and the third Helen Dyke. I must go over to them."

Yes, Miriam had come. With the warm, firm hand-clasp that Betty gave her, all the old hard feeling vanished.

Mr. Anstice and Miss Minturne stood a little aside.

"After all, there is nothing sweeter and dearer than a bevy of graceful, pleasant, well-bred girls," said Miss Minturne.

"These are uncommonly pretty, too," he answered, studying the different groups.



"Yes," said Miss Minturne, thoughtfully, and she glanced from one to another. "Yes," she repeated, "but it is their air of good-breeding that constitutes their charm. They are well-bred."

"Yes, and that is rather striking, is it not, for I hear on all sides that our American girls are not so polite as their mothers were."

"Pure nonsense," retorted Miss Minturne. "That's what every generation says of succeeding ones. Blessings brighten as they take their flight, and our grandmothers believe they were pinks of perfection. But I have my own opinion. The girls now are much more wholesome than they were in my day. I only hope they will preserve their charm along with this out-of-door manner they carry around with them. They have, so far."

"They have a champion in you, Isabelle," Mr. Anstice answered. "Yet I agree with you. But, bless me, how crude they seem! Were we like that?" He nodded towards a happy circle of laughing boys and girls.

"Yes, just that light-hearted, Theo," answered Miss Minturne. "It is better as it is now, though, is n't it?"

"How can I fail to believe in compensation



when I am allowed to stand here by you, and twenty years ago you hadn't time for Theo Anstice except 'to carry your coat'?"

"Oh," cried Miss Minturne, "surely —"

"Yes, wherever I went I heard that repeated."

"I — only said it as a joke, Theo."

"Perhaps the compensation comes in that now I am willing and glad to carry your coat and you allow me," he said slyly.

"That's decidedly ambiguous. I won't let you aim your sarcasm at me when I am having a children's party. Your revenge must be satisfied when you see me brought to giving children's parties, like any good auntie."

"You know, Isabelle, there is only one woman in the world for me."

"And only one man for me, Theo, — but I won't tell you his name. Can you guess?"

With a laugh Miss Minturne hurried away, leaving Mr. Anstice looking after her questioningly.

"Wait a moment, Isabelle," said an elderly woman, putting out a detaining hand as Miss Minturne passed, and with the other raising her jewelled lorgnette. "I want to congratulate you on your beautiful young friend," she went on, looking steadily at Betty. "She is charming. How well she stands! I notice especially her



respectful way of listening to older people. A lost art, Isabelle!"

"It delights me that she has met your approval, dear Mrs. Oakley," answered Miss Minturne, earnestly, looking admiringly at the older woman.

The lorgnette dropped gracefully, and a pair of keen eyes met hers.

"You must bring her to my receptions. There is not another girl, unless I except her dainty friend, who suits me as she does."

"You make me feel like a successful mamma," laughed Miss Minturne; but Mrs. Oakley could see that her interest in Betty had brought real warmth into her eyes and voice, though, according to her habit, she had to laugh off her emotions.

Mr. Anstice sauntered up.

"Who are these handsome youths who have just come in?" he asked.

Miss Minturne moved towards the door.

"I don't know them. I must go and speak to them. Why, there is Bishop Waborne with them! They must be the grandsons Betty has told me about."

"Betty," said Jack, in a low tone, "be prepared. Your surprise has come."

Betty looked round eagerly.



"Oh!" she exclaimed, and she clasped her hands delightedly. "Why didn't they tell me they were coming?"

There were the bishop and his grandsons, Paul and Reginald, speaking to Miss Minturne.

Betty ran over to them, and the bishop held her hands, in his old kind way, so long that Reginald interposed:

"I think you might let us have one, at least, grandfather."

"Oh, the greed of youth!" sighed the old gentleman, and he turned to speak to Dr. Baird, who had crossed the room to meet him.

"I never *dreamed* you would come," exclaimed Betty.

"I say, that is nice!" laughed Reginald. "So we were not expected or wanted, only invited!"

"You didn't 'dream' we could stay away, did you?" said Paul, gallantly.

"Reginald, you are meaner every time I see you," cried Betty. "How *did* you manage to get away from school, Paul?"

"Well, I made up my mind to come, and I came."

He laughed as he spoke, but Betty saw the old indomitable expression around his mouth.

"Well, it was perfectly lovely of you both to





“THE AFTERNOON PASSED SWIFTLY WITH THE CONTINUOUS  
STREAM OF ARRIVING AND DEPARTING GUESTS” — *Page 325*







come. I never had such a glorious day." Betty sighed in her contentment.

"Betty, you have n't changed a bit," said Reginald. "You are eighteen now, are n't you?"

"You are only six months older, so you can't patronize."

"Anyhow, it's mighty good to see you again. Why, here is Lois!" he exclaimed. Betty had guided them up to the table where Lois was pouring tea, with Dunny assisting her faithfully.

The afternoon passed swiftly with the continuous stream of arriving and departing guests, the entrancing strains of soft music, the merry hubbub of fresh young voices, the festal slamming of carriage doors, the calling of footmen, the rolling of carriage wheels, and puffings of automobiles.

The last vehicle to leave was the Brooks's car, bearing away Dr. and Mrs. Baird, Betty, Lois, Jack, and Dunny.

"It was an unqualified success," said Dr. Baird, when the family had gathered together in the hall to talk over the reception.

Betty smiled into the fire.

"Yes, it was a beautiful affair," Mrs. Baird answered happily, "and we can never cease to be grateful to Miss Minturne."



"Yes, and to Mrs. King," said the doctor.

"I am pretty tired," said Betty. "I think I'll say good-night."

"So shall I," said Lois, suppressing a yawn.

But when they began to comb their hair, either because of the electricity that flew from the comb, or of some elfish spirit that takes possession of girls when they comb their hair together at night, suddenly they felt very wide-awake, and, shrugging into their white dressing-jackets, they sat down on Betty's window-seat.

They soon commenced talking about everybody and everything, and what everybody wore and what everybody said, and what everybody must have felt and didn't say, and what everybody said and didn't feel. Oh, it was, perhaps, the best part of the reception!

"Didn't Jack look handsome?" said Lois.

"Yes, and Craig, too," said Betty. "One would think he had attended receptions all his life. I was so proud of him!"

They were silent.

The night was warm, and their window was thrown wide. Summer was coming. Betty leaned on the broad sill, and Lois, among the pillows, had her hands clasped around her knee. Both were tired from the unusual excitement and



exertion of the day, yet they could not make up their minds to go to bed. Outside the moon was rising above the cedar, and in its light they could see the sparkling surface of the bay, the outlines of the hills, the cloudless sky, and the shadowy garden, while the gentle sounds of spring and the murmuring fall of water through the mill-gate rose to them intermittently.

Betty broke the silence.

"I feel, Lois, that our life will be different from this time on."

"I, too, feel that way. I hate to go to bed. Wasn't it splendid, Betty, to see the bishop's grandsons again?"

Betty moved uneasily.

"They have n't changed much, have they?" pursued Lois.

"No," returned Betty, hesitatingly.

"You and Paul —" began Lois.

Betty interrupted her by tossing back her hair from her face and standing up.

"I think I must go to bed."

"Don't, Betty. I could n't sleep —"

"I feel that I shall never sleep again," interposed Betty. "My head is in a whirl."

"We had a fine time, anyway," said Lois.

"Glorious!"



"Paul never took his eyes off you," persisted Lois.

"We are good friends, yet — I can get on with Jack so much more easily," said Betty.

"Yes, you are different with Paul. You are rather quiet."

"He kind of — scares me."

"Paul! I thought you admired him so."

"I do. I admire him until I can't tell the difference 'twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee when I am with him," said Betty.

"Poor Jack! Poor Craig!"

"Poor Reginald! *Not* poor Dunny," retorted Betty.

Just then the owl in the cedar tree gave out its "rattle-note unvaried."

"The owl is hooting at us," said Betty.

The girls laughed softly. The moon, now standing above the cedar, threw its brightest beams on the old house.

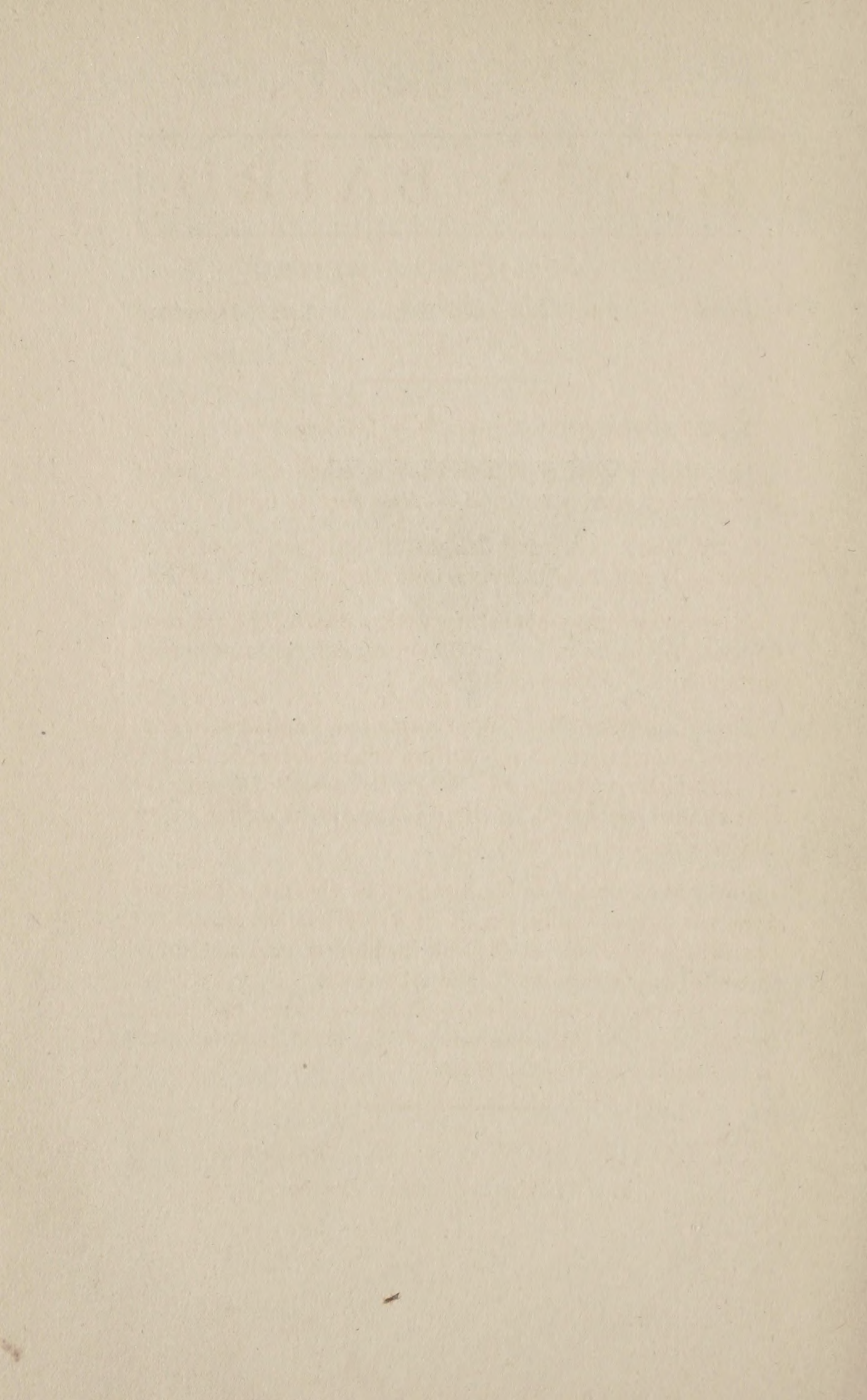
Betty leaned out of the window and lovingly patted the broad old shingles, where the moonlight rested placidly.

"You dear old house, you won't have a mortgage on you long."











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